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WHY 'YUH' TALKING TO 'YUHSELF'? EXPLORING ROLE IDENTITY THROUGH CONVERSATION ANALYSIS: Implications for Curriculum and Teaching

Raymond A. Dixon and *Hope Mayne*

This qualitative study used a modified form of conversation analysis to explore role identity construction of two primary school-aged children (male and female) in the Jamaican context. The participants were engaged in an informal conversation on imaginary play with an adult. Data were collected via the video conference medium, Skype. An analysis of question-answer, lexical choice and category, and perspective-display sequence of the conversation revealed that the adult and the male child expressed concerns about the female child's engagement in imaginary play. The analysis of the conversation also revealed that both children displayed different stages of role construction during the conversation. Implications for curriculum and teaching are discussed.

Introduction

It is widely understood that play contributes to a child's psychosocial development. Some sociocultural theorists describe play as a natural activity for children and the most critical activity of their early years (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Vygotsky, 1977). While freely engaging in play, children acquire the foundations of self-reflection and abstract thinking, develop oral language skills and metacommunication skills, learn to manage their emotions, and explore the roles and rules of functioning in adult society (Bond &Wasik, 2009; Verenikina, Harris, & Lysaght, 2003). Various social categories of play have been identified in the literature. They include: (1) onlooker, (2) solitary play, (3) parallel play, and (4) group play. The *onlooker* is the child who observes the play of others. In *solitary play,* the child plays alone; and in *parallel play,* children play along with each other but there is little interaction among the players. G*roup play* represents higher levels of interaction; with children playing together, doing similar things, and coordinating their actions (Dockett & Fleer, 1999).

The Jamaican Early Childhood Commission emphasized that play allows children to refine their motor skills, learn how to deal with their own feelings and emotions, think critically about a range of new

experiences, interact sociably with others, and resolve conflicts in appropriate ways. In addition, play is also important for children to develop their imagination and creativity. Through play they are able to experiment, discover, and dramatize what they see happening around them. In an attempt to make meaning of the world around them, play helps children to integrate knowledge in a meaningful way, learn self-expression, and gain a sense of competence (Jamaica. Early Childhood Commission, 2014).

Imaginary Play

Imaginary play is defined here as solitary play. This is sometimes referred to as private speech; a mechanism which Vygotsky emphasized that children use for turning shared knowledge into personal knowledge. He proposed that children incorporate the speech of others and then use that speech to help them solve problems (Slavin, 2000). Private speech can be seen in young children who frequently talk to themselves, especially when faced with difficult tasks. According to Slavin, studies found that children who make extensive use of private speech also learn complex tasks more effectively than other children. As children grow older, private speech becomes silent but is still very important.

Private speech often manifests itself in different types of imaginary play. According to Huizinga (1955), it is a stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition of its own. Every child knows that she or he is pretending or is only having fun. Nevertheless, the consciousness of play being "only pretend" does not prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, absorption, and devotion, which passes into rapture and temporarily abolishes that troublesome "only" feeling (p. 8). Soundy (2009) articulated that pathways into play are often influenced by early exposure to picture books. Conditions become ripe for imagery thinking when real experiences are combined with storybook events, allowing children to readily transcend the present reality and playfully engage in the fantasy mode. The imaginary play may take on several characteristics—invisible companions; personified objects, when a child attributes animate properties to an external object, for example, a stuffed animal endowed with human-like personality traits; and children who engage in extended role play by adopting alternative personas (Roby & Kidd, 2008).

Other researchers provided evidence that imaginary play activities are not only enjoyable in their own right, but also have clear intellectual, social, and emotional benefits to children who participate in them (Roopnarine, Shin, Donovan, & Suppal, 2000; Stegelin, 2005). According

to Roby and Kidd (2008), the propensity to engage in pretend play has been linked to several important developmental milestones, including the development of self-recognition and the theory of mind and language. For example, Bouldin, Bavin, and Pratt (2002) demonstrated that children with imaginary companions produced a range of more complex sentence types in a narrative task than matched control children without imaginary companions. In addition, children who engage in a variety of imaginary play tend to become more adept and flexible thinkers. Harris (2000) submitted that this is because they gain more practice at simulating thought processes other than their own.

Children are good at finding alternative stages to playact their fantasies, especially in circumstances where play is not sanctioned, such as in the classroom. According to Soundy (2009):

> youngsters readily take part in imaginary expression, discover available forums, and release emotions in subtle, but meaningful ways. They engage in visualization and auditory output as a strategy for learning how to create dramatic scenarios for expressing simple and complex information. These moments of play occur in small, precious spaces of time when the integration of language and imagination blossom into dynamic engagement with an idea. (p. 382)

So while play is believed to be an immediate and natural tool for generating and expressing ideas, and for developing vocabulary and language in early childhood; often, imaginative play—such as children talking to themselves on a regular basis—is inadvertently discouraged in some sections of Jamaica. The authors' experience in rural Jamaica demonstrates that this type of play is often discouraged. In some rural districts, it is an unspoken understanding that parents must be curious when their children seem to be talking or playing with imaginary friends. Such attitudes are rooted in old folktales that are steeped in the belief that spirits sometimes communicate with children. These spirits enjoy playing with unsuspecting children who may not be capable of distinguishing between the spirits and real persons. Such views are not surprising, as Klausen and Passman (2007) admitted that "many early descriptions of pretend companions may not be recognized as such because they were depicted in terms of spirits and other supernatural concepts" (p. 351). Interestingly, Anderson, Vanderhook, and Vanderhook (1996) highlighted that even at the end of the 20th century, some groups in the Americas still viewed pretend companions as preternatural powers that sometimes "will result in spiritual bondage" (p. 196).

Play and Role Identity

Levinson (2005) investigated the interface between play and identity in home and school contexts—in particular, the role of play in shaping role identity. He asserted that self-fashioning is a social and cultural space, and, as pointed out by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), "remains, more often than not, a contested space, a space of struggle" (p. 282). For example, Szeman (1995) listed a variety of games played by young Gypsy children that she had observed in a Hungarian kindergarten. Most of these games were connected to real-life experience and included activities such as cooking, eating, looking after children, "daddy-mummy games," travelling in groups, jumping, and hunting for rabbits. Children's culture provides a framework within which their social relations can be described (Geertz, 1975). Therefore, play can be perceived as a social practice distributed across a range of contexts and co-participants, and influenced by the tools and symbol systems of the culture (Wood, 2004). According to Levinson (2005), "learning is socially mediated and constructed as children participate in shared and distributed practices that are based on combining real-world knowledge with play knowledge" (p. 503; see also Brostrom, 1999; Hakkarainen, 1999). His study among Gypsy students confirms that play serves the role of learning, cultural reproduction, imitation, and enculturation into rules and norms of society. It also represents a site of contested power relations in which children challenge dominant modes of control.

Interactionism Theory of Play

Berg (1999) maintained that there is a relationship between the emotional abandonment of play and the emotional need to create and develop a personal identity. Speaking specifically about children playing roles, he advanced the thesis that the "fascination of play is born out of the childish unconscious need for building an identity, the need to get a picture of who one is" (p. 13). Contrasting Piagetian theory of cognitive development with Mead's (1932) interactionist theory of play, he indicated that the former theory explains play as a means for cognitive development and for fun and fascination, while providing no linkage to its necessity for identity development. Mead's interactionist theory, on the other hand, identified stages of play, known as the play and game stages, viewing them as stages of development of *Self* or personal/role identity.

Berg (1999, pp. 17–23) provided further clarity to Mead's interactionist theory of play by delineating and describing the various stages. He described them as:

- The Amorphous Stage – at this stage the capacity to differentiate between identities is not developed. The child exercises this capacity through mimicry and imitation without being aware of the possibility of taking on various identities. Their own Self is not crystallized, but is subjected to formation through the child's working with different human stimuli from the outside world. This stage is typical during the first two years of the child.
- The Play Stage – at this stage children gradually discover that they can be a special sort of player or participant rather than just an undifferentiated player or participant. In other words, through play they can assume the role of princess, knight, nurse, or adult. Children develop strong dramatic capacity and empathy. Through their play they start conceptualizing ambiguity and multiplicity of the world. This stage normally persists from ages two to six.
- The Game Stage – at this stage students are able to stick to their role in a game at the same time that they represent and adjust to the role of other players. So while the child explicitly plays a role, she or he implicitly maintains their identity. At this stage the child's identity begins to crystallize through play. There is a mutual adjustment and understanding of the corresponding identities involved; the child as an individual exists in relation to the multitude of identities in the social arena.
- The Stage of Generalization and Maturity – according to Berg (1999), at this stage the individual within the maturation process combines together all the games she or he participated in, and from these sculptures a coherent social whole. It involves complex games the individual plays and the consummation of the individual in a stronger, clearer, and discernible personality. The concept points to all the roles and attitudes that the individual has been in contact with integrated into each other.

Berg (1999) cautioned that there is no possible way to distinguish in a definitive way between the stages because one stage begins long before the preceding stage ends. In addition, the stages never go away totally once we are mature.

Since talk is inextricably linked with play, whether individually or in groups, analysing talk during play can open windows into children's actions, interactions, and also how they think about themselves and their environment. One method for accomplishing this is conversation analysis (Butler & Weatherall, 2006; Sidnell, 2010, 2011).

Conversation Analysis

According to Rapley (2008), conversation analysis is undertaken to focus on how social actions and practices are accomplished in and through talk and interactions. Through this analysis, one is able to focus on features of interaction such as how speakers take turns to talk, how talk is shaped by prior actions and shapes what follows it, how talk is designed to perform certain actions, what words people use, and how the broader trajectory talk is organized. Goodwin and Heritage (1990) indicated that the "discipline of conversation analysis essentially emerged as a fusion of the interactive and phenomenological/ethnomethodological traditions" (p. 287). This combination allows interactional material to be used as the basis to investigate the procedural "bases of reasoning and action through which individuals recognize, constitute, and reproduce the social and phenomenal worlds they inhabit" (p. 288).

From its inception, the proponents of conversation analysis insisted that in the real world of interactions, sentences are not treated as isolated artifacts but must be understood as forms of action situated within specific context and designed with specific attention to these contexts (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990). The conversational analytic approach promises to explain not only how the mutual intelligibility of words is ordinarily achieved, but also why various persons from different social categories—such as race, gender, visual and hearing impairments—experience conversational difficulties (Rawls, 2004). While conversation analysis focuses primarily on talk, its research design also integrates nonverbal aspects of interaction. Conversation data are collected by video or audio devices (Peräkylä, 2008). Peräkylä further added that:

> CA studies can focus either on ordinary conversations taking place between acquaintances or family members, or on institutional encounters where the participants accomplish their institutional tasks through their interaction. CA elucidates basic aspects of human sociality that reside in talk, and it examines the ways in which specific social institutions are invoked in, and operate through, talk. (p. 1)

According to Rapley (2008), when analysing conversation, some key features that researchers focus on are: (1) turn-taking organization, (2) sequence organization and turn design, (3) lexical choice and category, and (3) structural organization. *Turn-taking organization* refers to the sequence in which speakers take part in a conversation. These turns can range from single words, sounds, or gesture to "long stretches of talks" (Rapley, 2008, p. 77). Sometimes turn-taking is pre-allocated, as in a

judicial hearing where each person is given a time to speak. In less formal conversations, turn taking is not rigid and pre-allocated. This often imposes specific rights and responsibilities. Single acts are parts of larger, structurally organized entities. These entities can be called *sequences* (Schegloff, 2006). Speakers' specific actions are organized in sequences, and the most basic and the most important sequence is called *adjacency pair* (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), which consists of two actions in which the first action ("first pair part") performed by one interactant invites a particular type of second action ("second pair part") to be performed by another interactant (Peräkylä, 2008, p. 3). *Lexical choice and category* refers to just which words people used as they talked, *and structural organization* refers to just how the broader trajectory of the talk is organized.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use conversation analysis to explore the attitude of family members towards imaginary play, and decipher, through their conversation, the role identity construction of the children as described through the interactionistic theory of play (Berg, 1999). The following research questions guided the study:

1. *What does an analysis of the conversation between an aunt, her nephew, and niece reveal about imaginary play?*
2. *What does an analysis of the conversation between an aunt, her nephew, and niece reveal about each child's role identity construction*?

Method

This qualitative study analyses a conversation between three relatives, and situates their conversation within modern interactionistic theory of play (Berg, 1999), in an attempt to explore the phenomenon of child play in a Jamaican context. The method used was conversation analysis. Conversation analysis lends itself to a number of broad methodological precepts. An authentic experience was explored using equipment that captures ordinary conversation between family members and some details about behaviour, allowing the researchers an opportunity to determine what is distinctive about their interactions (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used. The standard used in choosing participants in purposeful sampling is whether they are "information rich" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Participants were intentionally selected for the researcher to learn and understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The participants consisted of an aunt, her 7-year-old nephew, and her 5-year-old niece. They were engaged in a conversation on the video conference medium Skype. The aunt, who was temporarily away visiting another country at the time of the conversation, had made a call to her niece and nephew in Jamaica.

Procedure

The conversation between the aunt, her nephew, and niece via Skype was audio recorded using a digital recording device. The recording was then downloaded to a computer. The conversation lasted for 35 minutes. A verbatim transcript was made of the conversation by repeatedly listening to the recordings from the computer and typing the words that were spoken and the person who spoke them. According to Poland (2002), it is important for transcripts to be verbatim accounts of what transpired. The transcription should not be edited or "tidied up" to make them "sound better" (p. 641). The speaker was identified on the left side of the transcript and what was said on the right side. Two transcribers reviewed the transcript by listening to the recordings several times to ensure the transcript reflected accurately what was said by each person in the recording. The transcript maintained the sequence in which each person spoke. Each person's turn of talk was given a specific line number. The transcribers then listened to the recording a third time adjusting the transcript according to the simplified transcription notation developed by Gale Jefferson. He developed a specific style of transcription notation designed to use "symbols found on a typewriter in order to render certain aspects of talk that are found in everyday interactions" (Rapley, 2008, p. 59). The following is the transcription:

Transcription

1.	Carlton:	I'll call [you ba-]
2.	Aunt:	[No don't call me back] I want to talk about why Donna
3.	Aunt:	(0.3) is talking to herself?
4.	Carlton:	°Ok°
5.	Aunt:	Can you tell me why Donna is talking to herself

6. Carlton: (0.2) I::: I DON'T KNOW ASK HER

7. Aunt: Is it is it possible for me to talk to her

8. Carlton: (0.3) .hhh OK

9. Aunt: Please go get her now so we can ask her why she is talking to herself

10. Carlton: (0.4) °She is coming°

11. Donna: Hello ((**whining**))

12. Aunt: He<u>llo</u> Donna my baby how are you?

13. Donna: (0.6) Fine

14. Aunt: I heard you keep talking to yourself, "why do you do that

15. Carlton: (0.6) She not answering you

16. Aunt: Let her <u>talk Carlton</u>?

17. Aunt: Donna.

18. Donna: °ye::::s°

19. Aunt: W<u>hy</u> do you talk to yourself <u>dar</u>::ling

20. Donna: °I'm sorry°

21. Aunt: Why are you sorry

22. Aunt: (.) is it wrong to talk to yourself

23. Donna: Because Carlton not playing with me and I have nobody to play with

24. Aunt: Oh so that's why you talk to yourself.

25. Donna: CAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO PLAY WITH ME ((**She stares at Carlton with a disappointing look**))

26. Carlton: I AM BUSY

27. Donna: > But yu sey yu on di computer an a ask if yu want to play and yu sey no::o <

28. Aunt: Ok, so what do you talk about when you talk to yourself

29. Carlton: SCHOOL =

30. Carlton: = >When she watch TV she talk to herself about it, when she at school and she [come home she play school]<

31. Aunt: Carlton let Donna answer]=

32. Aunt: =Why do you talk

33. Aunt: (0.3) What do you talk about when you talk to yourself Donna

34. Aunt: (0.4) D<u>onna</u>

35. Donna: hhh HMMMMMMMMM

36. Aunt: What do you talk about when you talk to yourself.

37. Donna: (0.5)Why yu waan to know dat

38. Aunt: Why I want to know that=

39. Aunt: = it is important that I know.

40. Donna: (0.3) (hmm) when a come home from school I talk to myself about school

41. Danna: (.) because I want to be good [in school]

42. Carlton: [you are good in school]

43. Donna: A WANT TO BE GOOD IN SCHOOL ((**staring at her Brother**))

44. Aunt: So:::o.

45. Donna: I want to be **good in school**.

46. Aunt: So you think that will help you

47. Aunt: (0.3) So you think talking to yourself will help you to do good in school?

48. Donna: No I don't talk to myself doing that

49. Aunt: But you just said that

50. Donna: Aun- Aun- Aun-, Auntie Suzie?

51. Donna (0.3) >look at Auntie Annette, do you see her<

52. Aunt: No I don't see her

53. Donna: She is here?

54. Aunt: She is there.

55. Donna: (0.3) She gone into the kitchen

56. Donna: But I still want to kno::w ……

57. Donna: huh huh huh. ((**staring at the chair**))

58. Aunt: Donna

59. Carlton: Every-time yu miss my birthday auntie Suzie

60. Aunt: A miss u birthday?

61. Carlton: Since yu gone you don't come to my seven year old birthday party

62. Aunt: Ok when I come for Christmas I will go to your party=

63. Aunt: =but I still [want to kno:::w].

64. Carlton: [But I don't see you till August]?

65. Aunt: But I still want to [know-]

66. Donna: [IS OCTOBER]

67. Aunt:	But I still want to know why Donna is talking to herself.
68. Aunt:	Donna I still want to know why you talk to yourself so loudly
69. Carlton:	Cause she is playing a teacher?
70. Aunt:	She is playing a teacher.
71. Carlton:	Mek Donna answer?
72. Aunt:	Do you play a teacher Donna (.) Carlton says you are playing a teacher
73. Carlton:	Yes and she talking to herself saying that she coming and that she is not going to be coming and there is nobody and she talking to herself an- an- an- she say come here I am not going to beat you.
74. Aunt:	Ok.
75. Donna:	.hhh mmmmmm ((**niece begin to cry**))
76. Aunt:	(0.3) So do you want to become a teacher Shari.
77. Donna:	mm[mmmmm] ((**niece continue to cry**))
78. Carlton:	She is crying, she going to cut u off].
79. Aunt:	OK don't cry Donna
80. Nashari:	mmmmmmmm ((niece continue to cry))
81. Aunt:	(**picccch**) I will talk with you another time ((end call))

Findings

The findings are reported according to each research question. Textual evidence is provided without the higher level of details offered by the conversational analysis notations to prevent the reader who is unacquainted with Jefferson notations from being distracted from the clarity of the conversational interaction.

Research Question 1: Imaginary Play

One category of sequence organization in conversation is *question-answer*, where a question is asked and someone offers an answer. A series of questions were posed by the Aunt to her niece and nephew. An examination of the types of questions shows the determination of the aunt to understand why her niece carries on imaginative play. Throughout the entire conversation the aunt altered her questions six times in the following sequence:

> Can you tell me why Donna is talking to herself? Line 5 (*opening question*)
>
> What do you talk about when you talk to yourself? Line 28 (*altered*)

> So you think talking to yourself will help you in school? Line 47 (*altered*)
>
> But I still want to know why Donna is talking to herself? Line 67 (*altered*)
>
> Do you play a teacher Donna? Line 72 (*altered*)

The aunt's persistence, as seen through her questions, shows that she desired to know why her niece talks to herself and what she talks about. The transcript and recording do not indicate what motivates this curiosity, and why she should be so concerned about an innocent activity such as imaginary play. She did mention in *Line 39* that it is important that she knows what her niece talked about when she engaged in imaginary play. Supplemental data collection methods, such as retrospective interviews, could provide insight into why the content of the niece's imaginary talk was important to her.

Donna seemed very doubtful and confused in her answer to the question "what do you talk about when you talk to yourself?" She answered, changed her response, and seemed to try to change the trajectory of the conversation by using distracters, such as indicating that another person was in the room and pointing to a chair (see *Lines 32–58*).

In respect to *lexical choice and category*, in Jamaica the official language is English but there is also a local dialect (known as Patois) which is spoken more often at home, outside of schools, and in social gatherings. When emotions such as disappointment, frustration, or anger are expressed, there is a tendency to switch to the local dialect as seen in *Line 37*.

36. Aunt:	What do you talk about when you talk to yourself.
37. Donna:	Why yu waan to know dat ((**Patois**))
59. Carlton:	Every-time yu miss my birthday auntie Suzie ((**Patois**))

The excerpt in *Lines 19 & 20* shows that the niece was apologetic after her aunt persistently asked her why she talked to herself; she then offered her aunt a reason for talking to herself. Her aunt was, however, unclear why she was sorry so she asked her why she was sorry.

19. Aunt:	Why do you talk to yourself darling?
20. Donna:	I'm sorry ((**very apologetic voice**))
21. Aunt:	Why are you sorry?
22. Aunt:	Is it wrong to talk to yourself?

A level of frustration was displayed by the niece when she gave as the reason her brother's refusal to play with her, when her aunt persisted in asking her why she was sorry to be talking to herself. Her brother insisted he was too busy and this obviously annoyed her—as indicated by her

rising voice and disappointing stare at her brother. Note also that she resorted to replying to him in her local dialect in *Line 27*.

(*Lines 23–27*)

23. Donna:	Because Carlton not playing with me and I have nobody to play with
24. Aunt:	Oh so that's why you talk to yourself.
25. Donna:	CAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO PLAY WITH ME ((**She stares at Carlton with a disappointing look**))
26. Carlton:	I AM BUSY
27. Donna:	But yu sey yu on di computer an a ask if yu want to play and yu sey no ((**Patois**))

The niece's objection to her aunt's questions about why she talks to herself, her seeming frustration with her brother, and also her brother's disappointment that his aunt missed his birthday are illustrated in their switching from English to express themselves in Patois.

A level of *perspective-display sequence* was observed in the conversation as the aunt tried to find out why her niece was sorry about talking to herself. As shown in the previous extract, the niece, obviously thinking that something was inherently wrong, used the refusal of her brother to play with her as an excuse. Her brother, in turn, justified his refusal by saying that he was busy with something useful or important. In other words, playing with his sister, to him, was less important than the activity he was presently engaged in on his computer. Engaging in imaginary play was the alternative to satisfy her need for play.

Frustration can lead to avoidance of questions. This is depicted further in the excerpt (*Lines 48–58*), where on two occasions Donna showed this avoidance by trying to change the trajectory of the conversation by pointing out that her other aunt, Annette, was present. When Aunt Suzie indicated she still wanted to know, Donna hesitated, muttered to herself, and kept staring at a chair that was present.

(*Lines 48–58*)

48. Donna:	No I don't talk to myself doing that
49. Aunt:	But you just said that
50. Donna:	Aun- Aun- Aun-, Auntie Suzie?
51. Donna	look at Auntie Annette, do you see her
52. Aunt:	No I don't see her
53. Donna:	She is here!

54. Aunt:	She is there?
55. Donna:	She gone into the kitchen
56. Donna:	But I still want to know
57. Donna:	huh huh huh. ((***staring at the chair***))
58. Aunt:	Donna?

Research Question 2: Role Identity

The conversation between aunt, niece, and nephew also indicated possible stages of role construction or *Self*. For example, Donna's brother told his aunt that his sister talked about school while she played by herself. When pressed further, Donna reluctantly admitted that was the case.

(*Lines 33–47*)

33. Aunt:	What do you talk about when you talk to yourself Donna
34. Aunt:	Donna
35. Donna:	HMMMMMMMMM
36. Aunt:	What do you talk about when you talk to yourself.
37. Donna:	Why yu waan to know dat?
38. Aunt:	Why I want to know that?
39. Aunt:	It is important that I know.
40. Donna:	when a come home from school I talk to myself about school
41. Donna:	because I want to be good in school
42. Carlton:	you are good in school
43. Donna:	A WANT TO BE GOOD IN SCHOOL ((***staring at her Brother***))
44. Aunt:	So.
45. Donna:	I want to be good in school.
46. Aunt:	So you think that will help you
47. Aunt:	So you think talking to yourself will help you to do good in school?

While it is not clear at this point what role she took on—teacher or student—while playing school, the conversation clearly indicated that she believes that playing such a role will help her to do better at school. Later in the conversation her brother revealed that she actually assumed the role of a teacher while engaged in play.

Lines 69–73

69. Carlton:	Cause she is playing a teacher?
70. Aunt:	She is playing a teacher.
71. Carlton:	Mek Donna answer?
72. Aunt:	Do you play a teacher Donna? Carlton says you are playing a teacher
73. Carlton:	Yes and she talking to herself saying that she coming and that she is not going to be coming and there is nobody and she talking to herself an- an- an- she say come here I am not going to beat you.

This level of investment in role play, as identified in the conversation, represents identity stage, Play Stage II, spoken about by Berg (1999). At this stage much emotional energy is invested in identifying with a role, such as a teacher, police officer, parent, and so on. As Berg pointed out, the urge at this stage is for a crystallization of meaning, identity, and reflective *Self* in a social world of infinite roles and possible identities. It should be noted that her role playing in her imaginative play is not without focus or goal. She sees it as a means to become better at school. So she is making the connection between playing a role and the performance and attitudinal improvement that may be accrued by doing so. She is beginning to recognize the expectations that are associated with a particular role which is considered appropriate by others. She knows that to receive positive appraisal from others, she must work at improving her performance (Simon, 1992). Using imaginary play as a means to enact a role was a means for her to take steps that will lead to an increase in the appraisal from others.

The analysis also revealed a possible stage of role identity by the brother, although he himself was not engaged in play. His refusal to participate in play with his sister, but rather to focus on working on the computer is indicative of the Stage that Mead (1932) and Berg (1999) characterize as *The Game Stage*; the capacity of the child to carry out and stick to one special identity or role and, at the same time, if necessary, adjust to the role of other players. The nephew refused to be distracted from his task. He focused on his activity even when his sister strongly insisted that he play with her. Yet he readily takes on the role of the older sibling, being willing to explain why his sister engages in imaginary play and initially encouraging his sister to speak for herself (see *Lines 5, 6, & 28–31*).

(*Lines 5&6*)

5. Aunt:	Can you tell me why Donna is talking to herself?
6. Carlton:	I DON'T KNOW ASK HER

(*Lines 28–31*)

28. Aunt:	Ok, so what do you talk about when you talk to yourself
29. Carlton:	SCHOOL
30. Carlton:	When she watch TV she talk to herself about it, when she at school and she come home she play school
31. Aunt:	Carlton let Donna answer

Discussion

What comes to the mind of a parent, relative, or teacher in Jamaica when their children or students are observed talking to themselves in imaginative play? The fact that a call made by an aunt—who was visiting another country—to her niece, primarily centred on why the niece was talking to herself would indicate that there was a level of concern on the part of the aunt. Such concerns shown by the aunt—while not proven conclusively in the data from the transcripts of the conversation—may be reflective to some extent of the sensitivity of some people in Jamaica to what imaginary play may be a symptom of. The Jamaican culture favours and encourages young children to play among themselves, model scenes, and construct events learnt in their classroom, in church, or in other social gatherings. It is understood that play aids in language, vocabulary, and even aesthetic (such as acting and singing) development of children. Equally, it is an unspoken understanding that parents must be curious when their children seem to be talking or playing with imaginary friends. Such attitudes, as pointed out previously, may be rooted in old folktales which suggest that spirits sometimes communicate with children by playing with them. The belief is that these spirits enjoy playing with unsuspecting children who may not be capable of distinguishing between spirits and real persons. So if a child is repeatedly seen talking to themselves, then a parent or observant adult should be curious and ensure that the child is not really entertaining spirits as their playmates. There is less concern if it is not a regular pattern or if the child exhibits this behaviour in the company of their peers while they are playing. Another perception held by many is that this might be an early indication of the onset of insanity.

The reality is that these long-held perceptions can influence parents, and possibly teachers, from encouraging children and students to cultivate the type of play that mediates psychologically and socially in the development of role identities. In order to increase positive evaluation from others, children will construct "ideal identities" and role-play these identities as a form of rehearsal to improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy (McCall & Simmons, 1978). As articulated further by Turner (2013), "as individuals become dependent on confirmation of their identity from others, their role performance have ever-more consequences for their level of self-esteem" (p. 334). When these identities move up in children's salience hierarchy, they become more committed to them and they evaluate their performance through broader cultural definitions and normative expectations. Emotions therefore play an important role in the child's self-evaluation of their role performance. Emotions serve as markers of adequacy in role performance, telling individuals whether their performances are acceptable or unacceptable. The child will therefore read the gestures, tone of voice, persistence, and so on, of others to see if their role performances have been accepted. If the reaction is not positive the child will experience negative emotions such as shame or guilt (Stryker, 1987).

The transcript did show at the end that the niece began crying. It would be informative to know why she cried. Was it because of the persistent questioning of her aunt? Did she somehow feel that her brother would still refuse to play with her? Did she feel that somehow her engaging in imaginary play was unacceptable to her aunt and her brother? Again, using another type of data collection method could provide better insight into this interaction. Interestingly, Stryker (1987) did indicate that if a child feels a sense of disapproval by others, the child may be moved to feel guilt or shame and question their actions in a particular type of play—resulting in withdrawal and the failure to benefit from the social and psychological gains that can be attributed to the integration of roles through play.

Implications for Curriculum and Teaching

Vygotsky (1977) described the role of children's self-directed talk in guiding and monitoring thinking and problem solving. Research also supports his ideas (Emerson & Miyake, 2003; Woolfolk, 2013). If teachers and parents were to embrace the psychosocial importance of imaginative play—and other types of play—it would be beneficial to the overall development of the child as they interact at home and in school. Play in its various forms, including imaginative play, assists in the child's development of intellectual skills and abilities, and aid in their social

development and how they make sense of the world around them. Schools should play an active role in fostering this development as this is where formal learning takes place.

Addressing the parameters of conversation analysis as a tool to understanding learning through observed conversational interaction, Macbeth (2011) said, "taking a turn in an ongoing conversation is itself an analytic task and achievement of understanding ….To take a turn is to evidence understanding" (p. 440). In addition,

> this turn–by–turn understanding displayed in each turn in a sequence is not the same as the understanding objectives of lessons, such as the learning of grammatical form, scientific principles, or how to make a request in a particular language, but it can provide evidence for how such educational goals of learning some pedagogic object, knowing some subject-relevant fact, mastering some disciplinary procedures are achieved: the temporally–situated practices for displaying an emergent and coherent series of understanding. (Gardner, 2013, p. 607)

Mondada and Doehler (2004) claimed that analysed extracts from classroom interactions, which show how tasks are collaboratively interpreted and transformed in order to solve problems as they arise, actually show how these transformations shape the context of learning, and even understanding of what learning is.

Private speech is often used by children when they are confused, having difficulties, or making mistakes (Duncan & Cheyne, 1999). Conversation analysis offers an effective ethnomethodological technique that researchers in curriculum and teaching can use, in conjunction with other methodologies, to study extensively the confusion or confliction students may have relating to their self-concept, self-worth, and self-efficacy in a particular task—important elements of role identity. As articulated by Woolfolk (2013), it is a widely held view by many psychologists that self-concept is the foundation of both social and emotional development. Positive self-concept, self-efficacy, and also self-worth have been shown to relate in various degrees to achievement in schools, job satisfaction, sports, pride, and enjoyment (Byrne, 2002; Goetz, Cronjaeger, Frenzel, Ludtke, & Hall, 2010). The various subcultures that are emerging in Jamaica and other Caribbean islands because of socio-economic stratification and the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor—which manifests itself through violence in its various forms, mistrust of authority, drugs, and entertainment—can produce conflict in role identity and *Self* in young people. Students' perception and attitude toward education in general and certain types of training, authority, gender, and a

wide range of sociological issues are evolving rapidly. Researchers and educators can use this technique to delve deeper into these issues so that a better understanding can be derived, and more effective frameworks can be developed to influence constructive change.

Maladjusted perceptions ultimately will affect students' behaviour and performance in schools and, by extension, society. Curricula informed by research must present effective pedagogical interventions that teachers, particularly during the formative years of children, can use to create learning environments that are conducive to the adjustment of incorrect perceptions about their roles and other social functions and interactions, produce positive social behaviours in students both in schools and at their homes, and provide a classroom atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation.

Conclusion

Conversation analysis as an ethnomethodology that can be an effective technique in analysing students' interactions. Used in conjunction with other research methodologies, researchers and educators can gain deeper insight into students' perceptions, attitudes, evolving role orientation, and other socio-structural issues that are presently faced in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean. Using conversation analysis along with other research methods can give researchers and educators a deeper understanding of students' perception of *Self*, efficacy, and self-worth. This can inform differentiated teaching approaches, as well as the development of various types of interventions to help students to grow socially and academically.

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INITIAL TEACHER EFFICACY OF IN-SERVICE SECONDARY TEACHERS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sharon Jacqueline Jaggernauth and *Madgerie Jameson-Charles*

Teacher efficacy is largely unexplored in Trinidad and Tobago, resulting in a deficit in understanding of teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach. This is important since teachers' beliefs influence how they feel about their work, how they assess and perform teaching tasks, and the educational experiences they provide for their students. This study examined three dimensions of teacher efficacy of secondary school teachers who were newly enrolled in an in-service teacher training programme at a university in Trinidad and Tobago. Teacher efficacy for classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement was measured using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, and analysed for differences by participants' sex, age, years of service, and school type. There were no differences in teacher efficacy by teachers' sex and years of service. Teachers over 45 years reported significantly stronger teacher efficacy for classroom management than younger colleagues. Teachers at government-assisted schools reported significantly higher teacher efficacy for classroom management and student engagement than those at government schools. Follow-up research should examine the sources of efficacy information that influence teachers' practice, in order to determine the contextual factors related to the school environment that influence teacher efficacy, and the influence of teacher training on teacher efficacy beliefs.

Introduction

Teachers' beliefs are one of the most influential resources that teachers take with them into the classroom. Teachers' beliefs influence their behaviours and their decision making (Swars, Hart, Smith, Smith, & Tolar, 2007); how they "feel, think, [and] motivate themselves" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118); and "the quality of the educational experiences of their students" (Nelson, 2007, p. 10). Teacher efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about their capabilities to perform various aspects of the teaching tasks. The deficit in teacher efficacy research in Trinidad and Tobago is worrying because teacher efficacy continues to be associated with teacher and student outcomes. These beliefs influence and predict teacher behaviours like effort on the job, persistence in overcoming obstacles, resilience when

facing failure, and levels of stress or depression experienced in managing demanding situations (Anderson, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). They also influence teachers' beliefs about students' ability to learn, so that they expend more effort in teaching with clarity, which results in better student outcomes (Shidler, 2009). However, it is also unclear whether teacher efficacy beliefs are consistent among different groups of teachers, or if they vary by teacher characteristics and school environments in Trinidad and Tobago. Hence, this study sought to measure the initial teacher efficacy beliefs of a group of secondary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago who were just beginning a 10-month in-service teacher training programme, to determine if such differences were observed.

Teachers' own past classroom experiences inform their beliefs about teaching and learning; and though individual teachers develop their beliefs differently, beliefs tend to become rooted and somewhat stable. Self-efficacy beliefs are future-oriented beliefs (Hoy, 2004) about one's capability to take the necessary actions to achieve a specific goal (Bandura, 1997). They refer to *perceived* ability, rather than *actual* ability; but are sufficiently powerful to influence thoughts and emotions, and, ultimately, action (Bandura, 2006). These beliefs are so important that research has been extended to various careers, including teaching. However, teacher efficacy research has focused primarily on pre-service primary teachers in North America, Europe, and Australia, and, more recently, in Turkey, Malaysia, and Botswana. While there is some research involving secondary teachers globally, there is an evident gap in the research in the Caribbean. Researchers in Trinidad and Tobago have not kept pace with research in other educational contexts, and the limited teacher efficacy research in Trinidad and Tobago has focused on primary teachers.

Recent research suggests that teacher efficacy may be altered and strengthened through consistent and deliberate exposure to professional development and teacher training that includes strengthening of teachers' content knowledge (Bayraktar, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). It is against this backdrop that the present study was undertaken, to measure the teacher efficacy beliefs of secondary teachers who had been teaching for some time without prior professional training, and who voluntarily sought out teacher training at a tertiary institution in Trinidad and Tobago. This paper reports the findings of the first phase of a larger study to determine the influence of the in-service programme on its participants' teacher efficacy in three dimensions of the teaching task—classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies.

Contextual Background to the Current Study

Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost state along the chain of Caribbean islands, and its significant deposits of oil and natural gas have positioned it as an economic pillar in the Caribbean. It gained independence from Great Britain in 1962, and is today considered a developing nation. Its government continues to prioritize the education of its citizens, albeit in a manner largely reflective of a colonial past that remains highly examination-driven, from early childhood to tertiary level. In this context, placement at primary and secondary schools is competitive as parents seek the *best* educational opportunities available for their children, particularly at the secondary level.

Secondary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are employed through the Teaching Service Commission. While they can enter the teaching service at any age from 18 to 45 years, retirement is compulsory at age 60 years. There is approximately twice the number of female teachers as male teachers in the secondary school system. The primary qualification for employment is an undergraduate degree, but some individuals who have not yet completed an undergraduate degree or who have only secondary level qualifications are also considered for employment. Currently, pre-service training is not a criterion for employment, but teachers have opportunities to engage in professional development within and outside of their schools to address their content and pedagogical knowledge. These circumstances suggest that individuals with some content knowledge can learn how to teach while on the job. Thus, it is likely that teachers initially rely on their own past experiences as students, and adopt the practices of their former teachers to cope with the demands of the classroom. These practices become habits when they are reinforced by some modicum of success with some students over time, even if they are not beneficial to the students. Thus, secondary teachers at any given school vary in age, academic qualification, content and pedagogical knowledge, and teaching experience. However, both academic and professional qualifications are fundamental to successful teaching (Agyeman, as cited by Okyere-Kwakye, 2013).

Although there are a few private schools and schools for students with special educational needs in Trinidad and Tobago, secondary schools primarily fall into a dual classification of government and government-assisted schools. Government schools are owned, funded, and managed by the state. Government-assisted schools are funded by the state but managed by faith-based organizations. Placement at secondary schools is based on a highly competitive, high-stakes selection examination that places top achievers at government-assisted schools, and has

unintentionally created a perception that they are *better* than government schools. These perceptions are often shared by teachers at these schools, but it is unclear whether this dichotomous classification of schools influences the efficacy of teachers there.

Government investment in education extends to teacher training at little or no cost to teachers themselves. For most secondary teachers, formal training occurs during their full-time employment (in-service training), which becomes optional upon completion of at least two years of service. In the last decade, there has been an increased emphasis on training and certification of all teachers, which is now a criterion for promotion to administrative positions in the school or the education district. The state-funded In-Service Post-Graduate Diploma in Education Programme (PGDipEd), offered at the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI) in Trinidad and Tobago, is currently the most heavily subscribed formal training opportunity for practising secondary teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. However, despite the presence of similar training at other institutions, there remains a backlog of untrained secondary teachers. Teachers who access the PGDipEd are generally from government and government-assisted schools, which underscores the need to investigate how teacher efficacy may differ not only by teacher variables, but also by school type in the local context.

Theoretical Overview

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1989) suggests that individuals' internal processing of information from their current and past behaviour, their personal characteristics, and their environment influence their motivation and behaviour (Crothers, Hughes, & Morine, 2008), though these sources are not necessarily equally prioritized or simultaneously considered (Wood & Bandura, 1989). This theory comprises four interrelated goal-realization processes that influence motivation and goal attainment: self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction, and self-efficacy. The last of these, *self-efficacy*, plays a powerful role in predicting behaviour and behavioural change (Bandura, 1997).

A belief is an acceptance that some idea is true, even in the absence of supporting evidence. Self-efficacy beliefs are informed by an individual's *mastery experiences* (successful completion of appropriately challenging tasks with little assistance); their *vicarious experiences* (observing and assessing the successes of others whose abilities may or may not match theirs); their *emotional arousal*, pertaining to performing some tasks; and the *social persuasion* by competent others who express confidence in them (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with strong self-efficacy believe that they

can accomplish a task in a given circumstance, even if it initially appears immediately insurmountable (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). They expect that engaging in particular behaviours will yield specific outcomes (Swars, 2005), but tend to pursue outcomes that they are more certain they can accomplish, rather than those about which they are less certain (Lunenburg, 2011).

Teacher self-efficacy, commonly referred to as *teacher efficacy*, is "a teacher's individual beliefs in his/her capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation" (Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, & Ellett, 2008, p. 752), regardless of their particular educational setting, and across cultures and countries (Klassen et al., 2009). These beliefs refer to what teachers believe they *can* do, rather than what they *will* do (Bandura, 2006), and act as filters through which they interpret their situation and decide on their plans and actions (Pajares, 1992). Teachers with strong teacher efficacy tend to be creative, curious, persistent, and resilient go-getters in their classroom approach. However, these beliefs are subject to the individual teacher's analysis of specific teaching tasks and his or her related teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and their assessment of their teaching context (Bandura, 1997). Hence, teacher efficacy is a complex construct that changes as teachers' experiences change over their careers, and interacts with their pedagogical choices. It has been well established as an important topic in education.

Measuring Teacher Efficacy

Attempts to measure teacher efficacy can be traced back to the RAND Corporation studies in the 1970s, and concerns still abound about our understanding of its nature and the precision and accuracy of traditional methods to clarify it. Research to advance understandings of teacher efficacy has been guided by two predominant models: the RAND model and the Bandura model. The RAND model deconstructed teacher efficacy into general and personal teacher efficacy, while the Bandura model positioned teacher efficacy within the realm of self-efficacy. Subsequently, the thrust in teacher efficacy research leaned towards Bandura's model of self-efficacy. In 1984, Gibson and Dembo developed the Teacher Efficacy Scale using Bandura's self-efficacy construct as its foundation, deconstructing efficacy into two independent dimensions: personal teaching efficacy and teaching outcome expectancy. Instruments to measure teacher efficacy continue to evolve as researchers attempt to clarify the "differentiated set of self-beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning" (Bandura, 2006, p. 307).

Various scales that have been developed or adapted for different contexts and domains include the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, 2007); the Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000); the Turkish Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (Çapa, Çakıroğlu, & Sarıkaya, 2005); the Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (Riggs & Enochs, 1990); the Mathematics Teaching Efficacy Beliefs Instrument (Enochs, Smith, & Huinker, 2000); and the Teachers Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The last scale measures teacher efficacy in three areas of teachers' work: classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement; and has been widely used to measure these domains of teachers' daily practice. This scale most effectively demonstrates that teacher efficacy may vary among various components of teachers' day-to-day activities, and has also been found to be reliable and valid in various educational and cultural contexts. However, it remains unclear if Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) three-factor solution is appropriate for practising teachers (Fives & Buehl, 2010) in the context under study.

Three Domains of Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy has been associated with positive student outcomes in behaviour, learning, motivation, and achievement. The three domains of interest in this study are teacher efficacy for classroom management, for student engagement, and for instructional strategies. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) define *teacher efficacy for classroom management* as teachers' perceived ability to manage and respond to disruptive student behaviour, and to establish expectations and rules to guide classroom behaviour. Efficacious teachers "have a classroom management system that reinforces good behaviour and weakens the undesirable behaviours of the student" (Steere, 1988, p. 159). Teachers' classroom management style is a reflection of their instructional strategies (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006).

Teacher efficacy for instructional strategies refers to teachers' perceived ability to create classroom environments that are conducive to learning by selecting instructional strategies that engage students in meaningful learning. It influences teachers' decisions about the nature and structure of classroom activities, as well as students' evaluation of their "intellectual capabilities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 240). Teachers with strong beliefs in this domain "invest more time teaching than controlling students who struggle with learning and/or behaviour difficulties" (Yeo, Ang,

Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008, p. 194), and appropriately modify instruction, when necessary, to engage students in meaningful learning.

Teacher efficacy for student engagement refers to teachers' perceived ability to develop relationships with all students, to motivate them to think creatively, to value learning, to improve their understanding, and to develop and strengthen their self-efficacy. Highly efficacious teachers find creative ways to keep students engaged during learning, and believe they can assist students to "become and remain involved, invested or motivated for learning" (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007, p. 182). Teachers who feel efficacious about their instruction, management, and relationships with students may have more cognitive and emotional resources available to press students towards completing more complex tasks and developing deeper understandings (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006).

Teacher Efficacy and Teacher Characteristics

Research has also explored the relationship between teacher efficacy and various teacher demographic characteristics and contextual factors, including teachers' sex, age, years of teaching experience, and teaching context. However, it must be noted that although there are general trends among research findings, these findings are not consistent across contexts, which may be due to variations in research contexts, populations from which samples are drawn, and the precision of the instruments used to measure the construct. Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon (2011) argued that despite the volume of teacher efficacy research, the construct has yet to be completely clarified, and there remains "measurement and conceptual problems … and uncertain relevance of teacher efficacy research to educational practice" (p. 21). Hence, the following review of the literature attempts to summarize some research in the areas of teacher efficacy and teacher characteristics of sex, age, years of teaching experience, and teaching context, with cognizance of these tensions.

Teacher efficacy and teacher sex. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2002) and Yeo et al. (2008) reported that male and female teachers did not differ significantly in their teacher efficacy; but Cheung (2006) reported that female teachers had significantly stronger efficacy beliefs than males. Klassen and Chiu (2010) and Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) reported that male teachers held stronger efficacy beliefs than females in classroom management, but not in instructional strategies and student engagement. However, research has not addressed how male and female teachers' efficacy beliefs in these three domains have influenced the teaching and learning environment, and, ultimately, student outcomes. As such, Brandon (2000) suggested that the beliefs of prospective male and

female teachers about their ability to perform certain tasks and their general competencies should be assessed prior to exposure to the classroom, especially since sex-based teacher efficacy beliefs have not been conclusively dispelled as an influential factor in the classroom.

Teacher efficacy, age and teaching experience. Robinson and Edwards (2012) and Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) associated stronger teacher efficacy beliefs with younger teachers rather than older teachers; while Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) found no such relationship existed. However, if Bandura is right about efficacy beliefs change over time, then these findings are debatable, since the maturation that accompanies aging is likely to influence perspective and, ultimately, beliefs. Teacher efficacy is fluid early in a teacher's career, regardless of age, but is difficult to change once it crystallizes and become rooted (Hoy, 2000).

On the other hand, Fives and Buehl (2010) and Page, Pendergraft, and Wilson (2014) reported no significant relationship between teacher efficacy and years of teaching experience. However, others suggest that efficacy beliefs strengthen as teachers accumulate teaching experience (Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cheung, 2006; de la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). This may be reflective of increasing confidence arising out of their mastery experiences and successes with students that less experienced teachers may not have accumulated over their much shorter time in the classroom (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). In contrast, some suggest that teacher efficacy beliefs weaken through the latter years (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Wolters and Daugherty (2007) reported a small effect of teaching experience on efficacy for instructional strategies and classroom management, but not for student engagement.

Teacher efficacy and the teaching environment. Teachers may believe themselves efficacious at certain tasks in certain contexts, but as elements of these tasks or contexts change, so too do efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). The reciprocal relationship between teacher efficacy and the teaching environment is one of the internal processes described in social cognitive theory. The teaching environment is in part determined by the school climate. Teachers who work in a school with a positive school climate—where faculty strive for academic achievement, share a sense of community, and benefit from positive collegial feedback, support, and collaboration (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007)— have reported stronger teacher efficacy than those who do not. These characteristics have typically been associated with government-assisted schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Elements of school climate that reduce teacher efficacy include "excessive role demands, poor

morale, lack of recognition … low status ... professional isolation, uncertainty, and alienation" (Webb & Ashton, as cited by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007, pp. 6-7), which are characteristics that have been typically associated with government schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Teacher Efficacy Research in the Caribbean

It is challenging to find teacher efficacy research in the Caribbean region, specifically among the secondary teacher population, but there has been some attention to teacher efficacy research in Trinidad and Tobago. In 2003, Pierre and Worrell compared teacher efficacy of primary (n = 77) and secondary (n = 146) teachers enrolled in an educational psychology course at UWI. They administered a questionnaire that comprised the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984); the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006); and two items from the RAND scale. The primary teachers in their sample were generally older and teaching for longer than the secondary teachers, and reported significantly stronger teacher efficacy than secondary teachers, especially as related to classroom practice. They attributed these differences to the compulsory training that primary teachers received, which was optional for secondary teachers (at that time). However, they reported that teaching experience was not a significant factor for teacher efficacy. They suggested that future research should attempt to determine the "potential of increasing the self-efficacy of secondary teachers through teacher training" (p. 112).

Worrell, Watkins, and Hall (2006) examined the demographic characteristics, educational qualifications, and teacher efficacy of 496 primary teachers in Trinidad and Tobago using Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. Approximately 90% of the teachers in their sample were trained, with more years of teaching experience than their younger colleagues who were untrained. They reported no significant differences in the teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies, by sex; though females reported marginally higher means than males on these dimensions. They reported that years of teaching experience positively influenced teacher efficacy of teachers in their sample. Gowrie and Ramdass (2014) investigated differences in these same three dimensions of teacher efficacy, by school type, size, demography, sex, and years of teaching experience, among 532 primary teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. They reported no significant differences among the three dimensions investigated by school type, location, and size; or by teacher sex and years of teaching experience. However, they reported that school type and location were significantly correlated;

suggesting that among primary teachers, those at rural, government-assisted schools interacted and shared more than those at other schools.

The Present Study

The PGDipEd is a 10-month teacher training programme offered by UWI and sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago. It provides initial training to secondary teachers who have an undergraduate degree, at least two years of teaching experience at the secondary level, and who are currently in service at a secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago. Teachers are trained in the curriculum areas of mathematics, science, English, foreign languages, social studies, educational administration, visual and performing arts, and information technology. This paper reports on the findings of the first phase of a study of in-service secondary teachers' teacher efficacy beliefs, pre- and post-exposure to formal PGDipEd teacher training. This phase sought to answer the following research questions in relation to in-service secondary teachers at the start of their professional training:

1. *What is the nature and strength of the relationship among their teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies?*
2. *Which of the variables, sex, age, years of teaching experience, and school type, were significant factors for teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies?*

This study was premised upon the assumption that teacher efficacy beliefs could be adequately measured using the selected teacher efficacy scale, and participants would respond to the scale items with integrity and professionalism.

Method

This quantitative study sought to explore the initial teacher efficacy of in-service secondary teachers at the beginning of an in-service teacher training programme (2013–2014). Registered participants were administered a teacher efficacy instrument pre-training. This paper summarizes the findings of the pre-training phase of the research.

Participants

Participants were 174 in-service teachers from the 230 teachers to whom questionnaires were distributed, producing a response rate of 76% (n = 27 males and n = 147 females) whose ages ranged from 23 to 56 years (M = 35.25 years, SD = 6.45); with years of teaching experience ranging from 2 to 30 years (M = 9.44 years, SD = 5.45); and who taught at government schools (n = 120) and government-assisted schools (n = 69). Their curriculum concentrations were mathematics (n = 14); science (n = 35); English (n = 29); education administration (n = 14), visual and performing arts (n = 21), social studies (n = 42); modern languages (n = 14); and information technology (n = 7). Respondents were volunteers who received no inducement or reward for their participation, nor penalties for non-participation. Table 1 summarizes the demographic data.

Table 1. Demographic Data for Study Participants by School Type, Age, and Teaching Experience

	School Type		Age Range (yrs)			Teaching Experience (yrs)		
	Gov't	**Ast'd**	**20-29**	**30-45**	**46+**	**0-5**	**6-15**	**16+**
Male	18 (10.3%)	9 (5.1%)	3 (1.7%)	21 (12.1%)	3 (1.7%)	6 (3.4%)	15 (8.6%)	6 (3.4%)
Female	102 (58.6%)	45 (25.8%)	33 (19.0%)	101 (58.0%)	21 (12.1%)	42 (24.1%)	90 (51.7%)	15 (8.6%)

Instrumentation

The instrument comprised two sections: a demographic questionnaire and the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), for which permission for use was obtained. The instrument measured teacher efficacy for classroom management (8 items); teacher efficacy for student engagement (8 items); and teacher efficacy for instructional strategies (8 items). Each Likert-type item was scored on a 9-point scale with *nothing* (1); *very little* (3); *some influence* (5); *quite a bit* (7); and *a great deal* (9). A mean score closer to 9 indicates strong efficacy beliefs, while a mean score closer to 1 indicates weak efficacy beliefs. Table 2 presents some examples of items in each dimension of teacher efficacy measured. The scale's developers reported high subscale reliabilities on this instrument (Table 2).

Table 2. Examples of Teacher Efficacy Items

Dimension	Sample items
Classroom Management	How much can you do to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom?
	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
Student Engagement	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?
	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?
Instructional Strategies	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
	How well can you implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom?

Procedures

Participants were debriefed about the study by the researcher between lecture sessions during the second week of the PGDipED. They were also provided with a brief introductory letter explaining the nature of the study and instructions for completing the instrument. They were allotted 20 minutes to complete the instrument, on site. Upon completion of the instrument, they were collected and immediately placed into an envelope to assure respondents of confidentiality. Data were entered into Excel, and later transferred to SPSS20 for analysis.

Variables

Constructs are mental abstractions of ideas that are not directly observable, and they sometimes are ambiguous. Hence they must be operationally defined to transform them to variables, which have characteristics that can be measured. The constructs of teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies in this study were operationally defined as the dependent variables; each variable was a metric continuous variable that was the mean of scores on eight Likert-type items related to it. The independent variables were less abstract constructs that were measured using categorical variables of respondents' sex, age, years of teaching experience, and school type.

Data Management

Prior to analysis, data were screened to ensure that they were accurate, complete, and consistent with the underlying assumptions of statistical tests, including sampling adequacy. Variables were examined for outliers and for skewness and kurtosis. Statistical analyses included Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax factor rotation to verify the factor structure of the TSES. This method is commonly used for instrument validation through testing and confirming the factor structure of the TSES in various contexts, and different study populations (Brouwers & Tomic, 2001; Gavora, 2011; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Schultz & Whitney, 2005). The three-factor structure identified in the North American and other contexts had not been demonstrated in the Trinidad and Tobago context. While the reliability and validity of the TSES has been established in other educational contexts (Çapa, Çakıroğlu, & Sarıkaya, 2005; Fives & Buehl, 2010; Garberoglio, Gobble, & Cawthon, 2013; Nie, Lau, & Liau, 2012; Tsigilis, Grammatikopoulos, & Koustelios, 2007), minor variations have also been reported (Johar & Badrasawi, 2009; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007), which researchers attributed to contextual and sample differences. Validating the TSES for local use ensured that inferences from data analysis were reliable and valid. Statistical analysis also included descriptive statistics for comparing the dimensions of teacher efficacy across teacher variables; tests of association were computed to examine relationships among dimensions of teacher efficacy; and means-difference tests were used to identify significant differences among dimensions of efficacy across teacher variables.

Results

Factor Structure of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)

PCA initially returned four components that explained 63.4% of the variance. Item 24, which refers to challenging capable students, loaded separately. However, omitting Item 24 from the scale and reducing the teacher efficacy for instructional strategies subscale to seven items improved its reliability and explained 60.62% of the variance. Table 3 presents the reliabilities of the measures of teacher efficacy, with Item 24 included and excluded from teacher efficacy for instructional strategies.

Table 3. Reliability for Overall Efficacy and Three Dimensions Including and Excluding Item 24

Measure of Efficacy	Reliability (α) for TSES	Reliability (α) Including Item 24	Reliability (α) Excluding Item 24
Classroom Management	.90	.91	.91
Instructional Strategies	.91	.83	.88
Student Engagement	.87	.88	.88

In the final analysis, it was concluded that the three-factor structure represented in the measurement model in Figure 1, which excluded Item 24, would be used for the analysis.

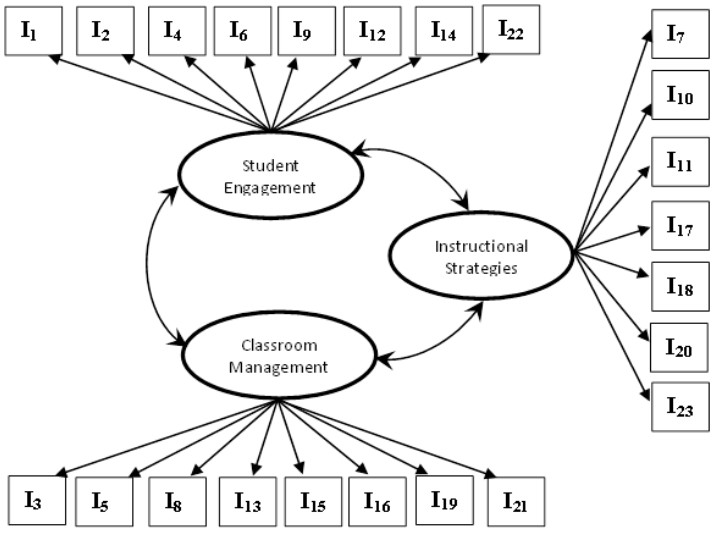

Figure 1. Measurement model of teacher efficacy.

Pearson's rank-order correlations revealed strong positive significant correlations among teacher efficacy for classroom management, instructional practice, and student engagement (Table 4).

Table 4. Pearson's Rank-Order Correlation Between Measures of Efficacy

Measures of Efficacy	Instructional Strategies	Classroom Management
Student Engagement	.687**	.724**
Instructional Strategies		.650**

*** p < .001 (2-tailed).*

Relationships Between Teacher Efficacy and Teacher Variables

Sex. An independent samples t-test compared the means of male and female in-service teachers' reported teacher efficacy for classroom management, instruction, and student engagement. A summary of the results is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of t-test for Measures of Efficacy by Sex (equal variances assumed; n = 174)

Measures of Efficacy	Sex								
	Overall		Male		Female				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*Sig.*
Instructional Strategies	6.75	1.03	6.95	1.10	6.71	1.02	172	1.13	.26
Student Engagement	6.19	1.11	6.19	1.11	6.19	1.11	172	.21	.98
Classroom Management	6.81	1.13	6.93	1.29	6.79	1.20	172	.59	.55

Non-significant results were noted for teacher efficacy for classroom management, t (172) = .59, p = .55; teacher efficacy for instructional strategies, t (172) = 1.13, p = .26; and teacher efficacy for student engagement, t (172) = .21, p = .98. The overall score for the entire group of teachers was lowest for student engagement, with males and females reporting equally strong efficacy beliefs. Overall, male teachers felt more efficacious than their female counterparts in all measures of teacher efficacy.

Age. Univariate between-subject ANOVA examined the effect of age on teacher efficacy beliefs of in-service teachers. Table 6 summarizes teachers' perceptions of efficacy by age.

Table 6. Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Univariate ANOVA for Measures of Efficacy by Age (equal variances assumed; n = 174)

Measures of Efficacy	Age								
	20-29		30-45		over 45				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*	*Sig*
Instructional Strategies	6.54	.160	6.71	.096	7.45	.184	2	4.60	.011
Student Engagement	6.07	.168	6.16	.104	6.73	.238	2	2.18	.117
Classroom Management	6.52	.179	6.84	.105	7.19	.228	2	2.18	.116

Results indicated that age was a significant factor for instructional strategies only. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons indicated that all age groups of in-service teachers differed significantly from each other in teacher efficacy for instructional strategies. Those in the 20–29 age group reported significantly weaker efficacy beliefs than those in the 30–45 and over-45 age groups; those in the 30–45 age group reported significantly weaker efficacy beliefs than those in the over-45 age group. For overall teacher efficacy, the only significant difference occurred between in-service teachers in the 20–39 and over-45 age groups. Here, too, in-service teachers reported the lowest efficacy beliefs for student engagement. Overall, older in-service teachers reported stronger teacher efficacy beliefs than younger ones.

Years of service. Univariate between-subject ANOVA examined the effects of years of teaching experience at the secondary level on in-service teachers' efficacy beliefs. Table 7 summarizes these results.

Table 7. Summary of Means, Standard Deviations and Univariate ANOVA for Measures of Efficacy by Years of Service (equal variances assumed; n = 174)

Measures of Efficacy	Years of Service								
	0-5		6-15		over 16				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*	*Sig.*
Instructional Strategies	6.84	.156	6.68	.091	6.87	.303	2	.598	.551
Student Engagement	6.31	.12	6.10	.099	6.37	.302	2	.971	.381
Classroom Management	6.32	.127	6.10	.099	6.38	.302	2	.042	.959

Teaching experience was not a significant factor for measures of teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy for classroom management was the lowest for all groups. However, it is noted that in-service teachers with more than 16 years of teaching service reported stronger teacher efficacy than their less experienced colleagues, but the 6–15 years group reported the weakest teacher efficacy beliefs among all teachers surveyed.

School type. An independent samples t-test compared teacher efficacy of in-service teachers at government and government-assisted schools. A summary of results is provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test for Measures of Efficacy by School Type (equal variances assumed; n = 174)

Measures of Efficacy	School Type						
	Government		Assisted				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*Sig.*
Instructional Strategies	6.71	1.07	6.82	.94	172	-0.64	.523
Student Engagement	6.05	1.14	6.51	.98	172	.-2.57	.011
Classroom Management	6.61	1.14	7.24	.96	172	-3.54	.001

In-service teachers at government-assisted schools reported statistically significant stronger teacher efficacy for classroom management, $t\ (172) = -3.54$, $p = .001$; and teacher efficacy for student engagement, $t\ (172) = -2.57$, $p = .011$ than teachers at government schools. However, though the difference in teacher efficacy for instructional strategies was not significant, in-service teachers at government-assisted schools ($M = 6.82$, $SD = .94$) reported higher teacher efficacy than those at government schools ($M = 6.71$, $SD = 1.07$). It was noted that the mean for efficacy for student engagement was the lowest among all measures of teacher efficacy. Overall, in-service teachers at government-assisted schools held stronger teacher efficacy beliefs than their colleagues at government schools, in all measures of teacher efficacy.

Discussion

This study explored the teacher efficacy beliefs of secondary teachers who were enrolled in a graduate-level professional development programme at a tertiary institution in Trinidad and Tobago. Analysis sought potential relationships among teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies; and to determine if, for the current sample, these dimensions of teacher efficacy differed by teachers' sex, age, years of teaching experience, and school type. The significant relationships among all dimensions of teacher efficacy observed in this sample corroborated earlier research that correlated teachers' beliefs about various aspects of teachers' work: their perceived ability to manage their classroom, appropriately select their instructional strategies, and meaningfully engage their students. Although this sample comprised in-service secondary teachers in Trinidad and Tobago, these findings mirrored those from studies of pre-service teachers in preparation for work in both primary and secondary schools (Gowrie & Ramdass, 2014).

Although sex was not a significant factor for teacher efficacy for this sample (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002; Yeo et al., 2008), male teachers reported stronger efficacy for instructional strategies and classroom management than female teachers (cf. Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012). Quite possibly, the legacy of male dominance in Trinidad and Tobago has currency in the classroom, fuelling the beliefs of male teachers about their ability to manage their classrooms and make decisions about their instruction, while females are nurturers whose role it is to engage children. However, the latter explanation may be unfounded since male and female teachers in this study reported equal efficacy for student engagement. Of note, however, is that teacher efficacy for student engagement was lowest for both male and female teachers. This suggests

the presence of other factors in the classroom that neither sex has been able to address sufficiently to strengthen their perceived ability to engage their students, such as capturing and retaining the attention of children who live in a highly advanced technical world by using strategies that emerged during the pre-digital era.

Mature teachers (over 45 years) and latter-career teachers (over 15 years of experience) in this study reported the strongest efficacy beliefs; while middle-aged teachers (30–45 years) and mid-career teachers (6–10 years of experience) reported the weakest efficacy beliefs, even weaker than their youngest and least experienced colleagues (cf. Bandura, 2006). This particular finding is curious, because teacher efficacy, as with any other belief, may be expected to strengthen with age and with years of teaching experience. One may conjecture that teachers who have encountered sufficient challenges during their early years in teaching may begin to experience burnout and dissatisfaction by the time they are mid-career, and begin to doubt or question their capability to perform the various components of the teaching task successfully (Bandura, 1997; Day et al, 2006). Burnout has been associated with jobs like teaching (Haberman, 2004; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006), in which individuals perceive their remuneration is not commensurate with the amount of work they produce and the responsibility for others that they shoulder (Scott, 2014), in the under-resourced and poor working conditions in which they function (Hutman, Jaffe, Segal, Kemp, & Dumke, 2005). However, it is likely that older teachers and latter-career teachers have matured in the profession and have accumulated mastery experience and successes that have, over time, strengthened their efficacy beliefs (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007) and mitigate feelings of burnout.

In-service teachers at government-assisted schools reported stronger efficacy beliefs in all dimensions of teacher efficacy than those at government schools. This finding may be indicative of how teachers' experiences at their schools, opportunities to learn vicariously from colleagues, and verbal support from significant stakeholders, may have influenced how they feel about their work and how they view themselves (Bandura, 1997). In Trinidad and Tobago, school type has become a form of stereotype for teachers and students at these two different types of schools, and most government schools are overshadowed by government-assisted schools. It is not uncommon to hear the teachers at government schools echo the sentiments of Webb and Ashton (as cited by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007) that schools like government-assisted ones are better and have better students, working conditions, and better teachers than government schools. Teachers are members of the very society in which they live and work, and in Trinidad and Tobago, government-

assisted schools are highly regarded while government schools are underestimated and undervalued. Thus, it is not surprising that, in this study, teachers at government schools have weaker teacher efficacy than those at government-assisted schools.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations, which must be acknowledged prior to discussing the implications of its findings. For example, although the sample size was adequate for the statistical analyses conducted in this study, these findings remain tentative and localized to this sample until they are confirmed by further research. Additionally, the assumption that teacher efficacy is a measurable construct remains contentious in the research community, since, despite the considerable amount of teacher efficacy research, conceptual and measurement problems still exist (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Hence, differences in research findings may be due to differences in research contexts, populations, construct definition, and instrumentation. Finally, the design and nature of this quantitative study provides a snapshot of teachers' beliefs at a particular time, without consideration of factors that may influence these beliefs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study explored the initial teacher efficacy of in-service secondary teachers in Trinidad and Tobago, who were at the start of a 10-month teacher training programme at UWI, St. Augustine. This study contributes to the research on teacher efficacy in the Caribbean contexts, particularly to the study of teachers in Trinidad and Tobago who are teaching at schools *without* prior formal teacher training in their curriculum content area. While the objectives of the present study were met, it raised many questions that require a more in-depth understanding of teacher efficacy, which a quantitative study cannot provide.

One such question arises around the potential influence of teacher sex on teacher efficacy beliefs. While the present study did not reveal significant differences between male and female in-service secondary teachers' teacher efficacy, there were differences between males and females in their reported teacher efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies. A closer look at how males and females develop their teacher efficacy beliefs is warranted—examining their prior classroom experiences as students and as teachers, the role of the sex of their own teachers, and how teacher efficacy beliefs

are manifested in the classroom. A closer examination of contextual factors, other than the significant factor of school type explored in the present study, is warranted to examine how the nature of teachers' daily experiences influence their assessment of the teaching task and related efficacy beliefs. Such contextual factors include relationships among teachers and administration, students, and parents; and support and opportunities for professional development, since sources of efficacy information may influence younger/older or less/more experienced teachers differently. Further, since it is not known how the previous experiences and cultural background of teachers in Trinidad and Tobago have influenced their beliefs about their success as teachers in their teaching context, in-depth interviews and observations of these teachers' school and classroom practices may reveal other factors that influence their teacher efficacy, such as locus of control and personality factors.

This study of teacher efficacy in the Trinidad and Tobago context captured some, but not all, aspects of the construct and its influence on the teaching and learning environment. For instance, the present study did not examine the sources of teacher efficacy that in-service secondary teachers prioritized during their years of service, including information from their teaching contexts and their own past and present experiences in the classroom. Such information is not only of importance to teachers themselves, but to teacher educators and programme developers as well. Professional development that is guided by this information can be so structured as to strengthen the components that provide the sources of information to which teachers are most attentive, and which will further support and strengthen teachers' efficacy beliefs. Research also ought to focus on how professional development for teachers strengthens their teacher efficacy in all dimensions, and how these beliefs change during ongoing professional development. Such information may guide teacher educators in the content, and pedagogical experiences and support they provide to teachers who pursue these programmes, and who are at different stages in their professional lives, which, in turn, may influence the quality of teaching and learning.

Finally, the current research provides empirical data about teacher efficacy beliefs, specifically those beliefs of a specific group of untrained secondary school teachers who were at the beginning of their formal teacher training. This study provides the groundwork for a more comprehensive study of secondary teachers' teacher efficacy on a national scale, having validated the instrument for use in the Trinidad and Tobago educational context. It also provides opportunity for further explorations of teacher efficacy beliefs, to determine the relationship between secondary teachers' teacher efficacy and secondary students' outcomes

like student efficacy, student confidence to do their subjects, and student achievement in various curriculum content areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

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RECOLLECTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF FOLK IN THE CLASSROOM: Teacher Perspectives

Dyanis A. Popova, Dennis A. Conrad, Lisa M. Philip, Deborah J. Conrad, and *Antonia Mohammed*

Using narrative analysis, critical pedagogy, and employing a phenomenological approach, this paper explores the experiences and perspectives of its co-researchers regarding their recollections of folktales and responses to a collection of Caribbean folk narratives. The paper also shares the voices of five educators regarding how similar folk narratives might be incorporated into the classroom. The results support the increased use of folk narratives in the classroom. The authors assert that the use of folk narratives offers a means of increasing student engagement, positive identity, and a sense of community, and enhancing learning among participating teachers and learners.

> *"Near here," she started, "there lives a man who knows more than anyone else. He knows how to cure bellyaches . . . how to put goat mouth on people just by saying their names, so then something bad happens to them. He even knows how to tell de river what to do. That man is de one we call Lagahoo."* (Excerpt taken and adapted from the book *A Wave In Her Pocket: Stories From Trinidad*, by Lynn Joseph, 1991).

The World Bank study, *Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions* (Cunningham & Correia, 2003), reported a challenge to the pervasive belief that many Caribbean communities enjoy good education, along with supportive families and communities. The report noted that this perception was overshadowed by youths demonstrating frustration, hopelessness, negativity, and a yearning to be heard. Generally, the report noted disenchantment related to conflicts generated by the disparity between their aspirations and the social and economic realities they experience. This is underscored, too, by male student underperformance and related disaffection. Youth participating in the survey shared particular concerns about the low relevance of education, which was perceived as being too academically focused and unresponsive to their cultural and personal needs and talents. Other concerns included what they saw as outdated curricula, insecurity related to gang cultures,

homosexuality, ineffective teachers, school stigmatization, and peer pressure.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2014) identified at-risk youth as an urgent challenge facing Caribbean policymakers and educators. Catalysts include the lack of opportunities at, or a sense of community with, educational institutions; weak or absent relationships with adults; poverty; and negative cultural values. Evidence of these concerns is apparent in absenteeism, low academic performance, crime, delinquency, and violence in school or involving school-aged children. The IDB identified several promising responses to this situation, including basic approaches like a seamless early childhood/primary education system in Trinidad and Tobago; the *Primary Education Support Project (PESP);* and the *Basic Education, Access, and Management Support (BEAMS)* programmes in Jamaica and Guyana. With regard to at-risk youth, the report acknowledges the positive contributions of the Youth Development Programme and Citizen Security Programme in Jamaica and Trinidad, respectively.

Within this context of distracted, at-risk youth, culturally responsive teaching and critical pedagogy offer hope and a means of engaging students in the broader understanding of education as going beyond high-stakes assessment. Students need to be able to locate and express their voices through more student-centric, culturally responsive curricula, which incorporate accessible socially relevant local resources and allow multiple forms of engagement and expression (Accioly de Amorim, 2009; Conrad, Forteau-Jaikaransingh, & Popova, 2013; Freire, 1970).

Teachers are the main facilitators in engaging at-risk youth. Despite legitimate concerns for upgrading their professional preparation, worth, and benefits, there is a positive correlation between high-performing, engaged students with high-performing learning communities and professional highly effective teachers.

Conrad et al. (2013) propose the use of student-centred, culturally responsive pedagogy incorporating the folk traditions. As with other localized oral traditions like rapso, folklore, including folktales, can incorporate culturally and socially relevant curricula, accessible resources, multiple forms of engagement and expression, and performance, thus creating opportunities for enhanced relationships

In the report on Engaging Youth at Risk (Trinidad and Tobago. Committee on Young Males and Crime, 2013), popularly known as the *Ryan Report*, appeals were made to facilitate safe and smaller learning communities; more positive relationships among teachers, students, and families; empathetic and responsive teachers; and more personalized and engaging instruction through the arts.

The co-researchers of this study consider our experiences with, and the potential of using, folk narratives, lore, and tales of our folk. We ask ourselves "what does it mean for our teaching?" We share our experiences and the lessons learned, advocating for its relevance in the contemporary classroom. Further, through the *conversation* and stories shared, we anticipate an increased level of motivation for, and a commitment to, finding ways to integrate folklore through folk narratives in our pedagogy.

We assert that the use of folk narratives in our classrooms serves as an integral part of artistic expression and identity formation, which will improve teacher effectiveness and learner engagement and achievement. As a pedagogical tool, folk narratives should be used to foster a sense of cultural understanding and self-efficacy, promote social consciousness and justice, and explore power relationships and dynamics within our society.

Theoretical Framework

Folklore in the Caribbean Context

Folklore is a belief system that includes songs, bush medicine, prayers, and folktales, all critical elements of culture and identity (Besson, 2011a). Folklore has a long and rich history, sharing and sustaining cultural traditions from generation to generation; serving as "the intersection of the personal and the public" (Santino, 2004, p. 371). Gencarella (2009) asserts that "folklore is not something that a folk *does*; rather, it is something that, in . . . doing, constitutes . . . folk, as both an immediate audience and a political category. [It] bears the capacity for pivotal contributions to critiques of power and dominant or oppressive moralities" (p. 173).

Caribbean folklore is full of compelling elements. Characters have strange names. Mystery and magic are used to explore the unexplainable or to resolve conflicts. Time is in the distant past. In folklore, old traditions and practices capture the unique social structure of the islands. Despite being an important subject of Caribbean scholarship, folklore has been marginalized within the literary tradition as perpetuating low-culture values. It is perceived to be undervalued and underutilized as a pedagogical tool and literary art form in the majority of schools (Anatol, 2000). Many of these traditions are unfamiliar to today's generation.

Folklore and its related narratives began as an oral tradition that retained social norms and cultural expressions across vast oceans; often representing social contradiction and revolt against colonialism and neo-colonialism (Roldan-Santiago, 2005). Folklore, then, not only presents a record of local histories, but also has the potential to aid post-colonial

youth as they develop their perspectives and positionalities as Caribbean adults.

Laden with superstitions and faith-based beliefs, folklore is extremely important to Caribbean communities (Henry, 2006), which owe many traditions and tales to a rich history of mixed cultures. Folklore might be described as a stable, cohesive mechanism, where traditional, often anonymous, communication is evidenced, imitated, and transmitted within and between generational groups. Besson (2011a), Hill (2007), and Henry (2006), among others, emphasize the importance of folklore to Caribbean communities, Henry notes and celebrates the contributions of J. D. Elder, a Trinbagonian anthropologist, who relates folklore to identity formation.

Folk Narratives

A subsection of folklore involves its literary representations. These are referred to as folk- or prose-narratives (Bascom, 1965), and include folktales, literary renderings of folktales, and folk-referenced narratives.

*About folktales***.** Within and emergent from the oral traditions are fictional tales about people and/or animals that describe how the main characters cope with the events of everyday life. Folktales are often used to teach a lesson or explain the less explicable. Folktales are characterized by simple language, supernatural powers, readily recognizable problems, and conflicts. Many folktales do not have happy endings (although some do) in which good or desirable human qualities are represented and rewarded. Folktales specifically draw upon the oral traditions and experiences of the Caribbean people, colouring daily life, and as creative endeavours (Hill, 2007).

James-Williams (2011) contends that these storytelling traditions initially blended with or adopted the local Amerindian folklore, then amassed the traditions of other voluntary and involuntary immigrants as time went by. James-Williams argues, for example, that the mythical characters *Papa Bois* and *Mama Glo* are evidenced in Trinidad and Tobago's and South American cultures. Early migratory patterns by Amerindian tribes into Trinidad, colonization of African and East Indian peoples, and bricolage facilitated the continued existence of these folkloric characters:

> Morphologically, the forest folklores of Trinidad and Tobago are close to those of South American native communities. Both sets of myths underscore the importance of the forest and water creatures, the presence of protector spirits (with similar features), and the presence of the hunter/fisherman as well as human/animal transformations. (James-Williams, p. 5)

Smith (2005) suggests that the folktale was a way for oppressed and colonized peoples, including slaves, to make sense of the experiences they endured. Maintaining their oral traditions helped to preserve cultural habits, norms, expectations, and other memories of the homelands; serving as acts of survival, resistance, and resilience. These *memories* were often ways that conquered or repressed peoples fought against their repressors; hiding messages and preserving cultural and social identity (Haynes, 2011).

For example, diverse manifestations of Anansi stories about the trickster spider and his animal friends, which originated on the African continent, have traversed the Americas and the Caribbean (Auld, 2007). The basic idea of the stories, their characters, and their lessons has stayed the same, with variations based on pertinent cultural aspects of the adopting community.

Literary renderings of folktales. These refer to attempts to represent folktales in literature. Often, the literary interpretation is a weakened reflection of the oral presentation, having had to suffer the efforts of translators and transcribers across languages over decades. Mbele (2000), referencing Knappert in Bertoncini (1989), asserts that much of what the African storyteller communicates to his audience cannot be caught and confined in a book. This is because all the characters of the drama are introduced with their own voices, which might be the snort of a wild pig or even the yawn of a lion. As such, many of the folktales we know are re-created stories. Still they are important representations of folktales.

Folklore referenced narratives. The efforts of Besson and Lovelace, where they refer and relate their key characters to elements of the folklore, reflect the second form of folk narratives addressed. These narratives provide opportunities for critical reflection and learning, connecting folklore with social mores, traditions, and the experiences of our diverse people.

Folk narratives, be these as folktales, folk renderings, or folk referenced, provide us with windows through which we can understand and explore our stories and identities.

About the Folk Narratives

As co-authors who were born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, the co-researchers of this study have ready access to local stories and recollections. We acknowledge our folkloric tradition as including a wide array of mythical characters and creatures, reflecting the fact that the people came from many different cultures and from almost every

continent. Together, the narratives form a truly unique combination of tales (Joseph, 1994). Many of these stories are embedded in the combined animist beliefs of West Africa, South America, and India, creating stories of survival, death, and everyday life. These tales can range from entertaining tales of mischief to exploring the role(s) of children in society (Joseph, 1994), and the socialization of particular community and cultural groups (Anatol, 2000).

Both Anatol (2000) and Besson (2011a) share the idea of similarities between the folklore of Trinidad and Tobago and that of other cultures. Aside from entertainment, the most common themes across cultures are the teaching of morals and behavioural norms, the preservation of customs, fear of the supernatural, and the documentation of a history of oppression. Folklore plays a large role in society and in culture, and acts as a means to teach social norms, explain somewhat unexplainable occurrences, and preserve community memories. This study serves as a foundational investigation into the role of folk narratives in classrooms. We also invite consideration of its applicability to promote social understanding, consciousness, and development.

Multicultural Education and the Trinbagonian Context

Trinidad and Tobago (Trinbago) has been described as being among the most culturally diverse countries in the Caribbean (Descartes, 2012). This is the result of a complex hybrid of conquest, slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and immigration. Defining multicultural education, even in such a recognizably diverse society, can prove to be challenging. Three perspectives, as proposed by Banks (2006), Nieto (1992), and Sleeter and Grant (2006), stand out. Banks uses a broad definition of a fixed concept, with five specific dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture/social structure. Nieto interprets multicultural education as more elastic, acknowledging the impact of learning and sociopolitical contexts. For her, multicultural education is a process characterized by key characteristics. These include material that it is antiracist; includes the basic; is important for all; pervades the entire learning environment—school climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships; aims at action for social justice; and includes critical pedagogy. Sleeter and Grant, extending the definition to include sociopolitical power, include the following five approaches: academic skills acquisition (teaching the different), developing and enhancing relationships (human relationships), single group studies, self-reflexivity, and reconstructionism.

While the contributions of the aforementioned authors all present

unique perspectives on multicultural education, they all deal with anti-racism, anti-oppression, and the readiness to challenge the privilege, policies, and practices that sustain unequal schooling conditions. The overall goal, then, is the creation of a more just society through education and through the provision of space to support and encourage the development of critically reflective and socially engaged students as they work toward high academic achievement. In spite of, or perhaps because of, its base in such a broad concept and range of ideas, there is no universal acceptance of multicultural education or how it might be addressed.

Critics of multicultural education perceive it as divisive, and excessively emphasizing race and ethnicity. Schlesinger (1998) is among critics arguing that teaching to a specific group only emphasizes self-esteem, rather than enhancing academic rigour. True multicultural education, however, neither teaches to nor about a specific group, nor does it emphasize academic achievement. Rather, it represents a willingness to embrace multiple cultural perspectives as a tool of social and academic learning that goes beyond the requirements of contemporary schooling.

Taylor (2012) contends that the ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan culture intrinsic to Trinidad has been gradually emerging beyond race and class. He posits that a focus on multiculturalism is not as valuable for the society as is being portrayed and used by the governing regime. We assert, however, that this has more to do with a misuse and misunderstanding of multicultural education than with the value of the field itself. Taylor suggests that acknowledging the value of cultural diversity as a resource is important in establishing a framework for, and building, national cultural identity.

Critical Consciousness and Folklore

Critical consciousness, as an aspect of critical pedagogy, evolved as a methodology to foster critical literacy among Brazilian peasants toward social change (Freire, 1970, 1974). Rather than condoning the idea of stepping back in observation and analysis to find solutions for social problems, Freire (1974) asserts his belief that social analysis should be participatory, essentially allowing the entire community to codify and co-construct reality into symbols for critical awareness. This facilitates creating a space in which relationships with society can be challenged and potentially altered. This *problematizing* of the natural, cultural, and historical realities in which people find themselves can be applied to working with marginalized or disenfranchised youth in numerous locales (Diemer & Li, 2011). Three recurring themes in Freire's definition of critical consciousness have been identified by Mustakova-Possardt

(1998): 1) a way of knowing involving the critical analysis of reality, 2) a sense of connectedness fostered by analysing as a participant rather than an observer, and 3) a process of collective dialogue. Freire's goals of raising consciousness and overcoming obstacles cannot be accomplished without first starting with the life situation of the learner, and the way in which the knowledge affects their daily experiences and interactions. This methodology encourages discussion and the sharing of potentially different interpretations and perspectives.

In the case of neo-colonial youth—those born into so called *third-world* or less resourced societies—this type of critical analysis and discussion can lead to an in-depth look at the historical circumstances that have led to society's contemporary social challenges, and help these youth to make sense of the world around them. Zamudio, Bridgeman, Russell, and Rios (2009) suggest that a major strategy for developing critical consciousness is uncovering one's position in the current social culture. Haynes (2011) explores this idea further:

> Forging a deeper understanding of self cannot be truly accomplished if we begin with a prejudiced concept of self. We have allowed history to take our legends as myth and to replace our stories with its concept and definition of us, thereby accepting history's myth of us, beginning with claiming ourselves as Caribbean people and striving for pride of place, while by that very definition, we accept history's primitive understanding of our Amerindian ancestors. (p. 62)

As folklore lends voice to both the past and the present (Dorson, 1963), both classic and contemporary forms offer a forum through which this type of social awareness can be fostered. Gencarella (2009) additionally identifies three stages of critical folklore studies: the analysis of folklore as a critical practice, the criticism of folklore practices, and the production of folklore and folklore studies as a critical act. These go beyond storytelling sessions toward a deeper understanding of self and community.

With its potential for community building, folk narratives are indispensable in any introspective of Caribbean history and society. However, these are underutilized in classrooms today. Increased classroom use of Caribbean folk narratives, along with the tools of critical pedagogy, will not only maintain the historical record but can also increase self-awareness, self-efficacy, and cultural confidence in Caribbean youth.

The Idakeda Group, a family-owned performance group based in Port of Spain, Trinidad, represents one way of engaging youths, including those considered at risk, with folk narratives and performance

(http://www.idakedagroup.com/services.php?contentid=1018). Through dramatic presentations, poetry readings, literature, and workshops, the group has been able to serve as a catalyst for empowering discussion on youth concerns and identity. While celebrating the efforts of groups like Idakeda, there is a need to consider the critical implementation of folklore, including the use of folktales in Caribbean classrooms.

About the Inquiry

Method

The focus of our inquiry was to consider the recollections and perspectives of five educators on reading a collection of folk stories. Our approach to this inquiry was phenomenological. This method involved creating and organizing self-developed narratives around the guiding questions, reviewing and forming initial codes, describing the sources of data and the phenomenon, identifying themes, illustrating how the phenomenon is experienced, and sharing the essence of the developed narratives (Creswell, 2013). For purposes of this study, we considered the experiences associated with, and use of, folk narratives as the central phenomenon.

We acknowledge that we are neither anthropologists nor folklorists. Instead, we conduct this study through the lens of educators with diverse backgrounds and experiences. As such, we have not attempted a formal structural, linguistic, or content analysis, but rather we explore our responses to the selected material and share our ideas for making better use of folktales and stories in the classroom and within our learning communities.

We, the five co-researchers, come from one common space, namely, Trinidad and Tobago, although our lived, teaching, and learning experiences are diverse. All but one of us self-identify as being multiracial, acknowledging our African, Carib, East Indian, *Spanish* [local term referring to Spanish-speaking ancestors], and European ethnicities.

In terms of professional identities, we are all educators—two primary school teachers [Lisa and Antonia]; one doctoral student [Dyanis]; and two college professors, [Deborah and Dennis]. Lisa recently resumed primary school teaching after completing her B.Ed. She has always had an interest in culture, even if mostly as an observer, and how it might be used to engage students in the classroom. Currently, she teaches Standard 5 students in a suburban school district in Trinidad. She is also continuing studies towards her master's degree in Adult Education. She is an avid reader, more recently in Caribbean literature.

Antonia has a B.Ed. in special education. She and her family are very much involved in cultural art forms. She has a particular interest in the spoken word traditions. She teaches 10-year-old boys in a suburban elementary school. She also lives in Trinidad.

Dyanis is a PhD candidate currently situated in southwestern Virginia in the United States. Her research interests focus on social justice, and curriculum and instruction, specifically Teaching English as a Second Language and Multicultural Education. As an international student and teaching assistant, she uses multicultural centric literature in her courses.

Deborah is an Associate Professor of Education in northern New York, where she teaches literacy courses to undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates. She has always been a lover of reading and poetry. She continues to infuse fiction, including those that are culturally centric, within her courses.

Dennis is also in higher education. He teaches courses in Inclusive and Special Education at a university in northern New York. As with Deborah and Dyanis, he uses integrated fiction in most of his courses.

The Readings

We began this project following a discussion Dennis had with Lisa and Antonia about the challenges facing teachers striving to engage students in Trinidad. It was proposed that teachers should use materials that were culturally relevant. Dennis questioned whether teachers even read books that were Caribbean centric. The conversation was extended to Dyanis and Deborah, who both agreed that culturally relevant literature had the potential to maximize opportunities for student engagement and learning, but should begin with the teacher's knowledge of literature that honoured the cultural heritage of their students. As an end result, we created a list of the books specific to Trinidad culture that addressed elements of folktales. Collaboratively, we ranked the books based on frequency and familiarity, and then developed a plan to ensure that we each read the 10 top-ranked books as read by group members. We planned to do so over a six-month period. During that period we added another five books and extended the time by another two months. These included the books written by Besson and Lovelace referred to as folklore referenced narratives, and the others, which comprised literary renderings of folktales. We refer to the collection of these 15 books as folk narratives. The following titles comprised the list:

- *A Wave in Her Pocket: Stories from Trinidad* (Joseph, 1991)
- *Caribbean Indian Folktales* (Mahabir, 2005)

- *Folklore and Legends of Trinidad and Tobago* (Besson, 2011)
- *Is Just a Movie* (Lovelace, 2012)
- *Lagahoo Poems* (Aboud, 2004)
- *Monkey Liver Soup and Other Tales From Trinidad* (Ashtine, 1973)
- *Monkey Polo Tricks Manicou* (Ramsawak, 2000)
- *Salt* (Lovelace, 2004)
- *Salt and Roti: Indian Folk Tales of the Caribbean* (Parmasad, 2000)
- *Sapotee Soil* (Haynes, 2010)
- *Spirit of the Times* (Narine, 2011)
- *The Mermaid's Twin Sister: More Stories From Trinidad* (Joseph, 1994)
- *The Lagahoo's Apprentice* (Maharaj, 2011)
- *The Voice in the Govi* (Besson, 2011)
- *West Indian Folk-Tales* (Sherlock, 1978)

While these books are primarily from Trinidad and Tobago, we contend that due to the general similarity of some folkloric characters throughout much of the Caribbean, our discussion on the use of such narratives can be applied to the region.

Guiding Questions

We read these books individually, then developed self-monologic narratives to the following guiding questions:

1. *What recollections of our folk came to mind on reading these stories?*
2. *What representations of historical or social realities can we identify?*
3. *How can folktales be utilized in classroom instruction?*

Analysis

We acknowledge that the recollections of how we experienced folktales during childhood evoked intense imagery and nostalgia. This no doubt fostered our interest in reading the folk narratives listed, and may have

biased our perspectives on the inclusion of such narratives in our pedagogy.

In analysing our developed responses as narratives to the key questions, we used an eclectic approach that respects folklore as a living, organic phenomenon (Abrahams, 1963; Bascom, 1965). Through our readings, we developed a deeper understanding of the folk narratives we reviewed; considering their historical context, intention, form and feeling, audience, and language use. This allowed us a rich appreciation of the perspectives of our co-researchers, and the memories and stories that evolved from our developed narratives and discussions.

Once our developed narratives were shared, we started the process of identifying common themes or unique stories related to the specific questions we were considering. We also considered how the folkloric narratives we read could be used in classrooms to encourage critical thinking and the development of local consciousness. Through the lens of contemporary narrative inquiry, we treated the folklore narratives as a distinct form of discourse and action, socially situated interactive experiences, being shaped and influenced by social realities (Chase, 2005).

The Journey through Folklore: Recollections and Representations

In compiling the responses to the guiding questions, it was evident how important folk narratives as folktales were to family values prior to this era of Twitter, tablets, and smartphones. Entertainment was a family affair, and it was common to hear stories of times long ago when grandparents, often community storytellers, would gather the children at their feet and tell them stories, myths, and legends intended to educate, entertain, and socialize. These stories not only brought families and communities together for entertainment, and turned otherwise dull moments into times for togetherness, but they also instilled respect, fear, and obedience (Anatol, 2000).

Recollections

We each have recollections that mirror this imagery, though from different eras. Deborah's memories emerge from the 1960s when few homes had televisions, and weekends meant that neighbours would often sit talking late into the night, often over a glass of Old Oak rum with ice and water:

> *Sometime into the night, someone will begin with "you know, long ago we use to …" and very soon, stories will be told of escapades in the night with phantoms and who in the neighbourhood was likely*

> *to be a soucouyant based on their unusual sleep patterns and shadowy existence. Left to amuse ourselves as the adults socialized, my siblings and I would eavesdrop on these adult conversations, mesmerized with an unfamiliar world that beckoned to us from the lips of our elders. Later when we were sent to bed, we huddled together to sleep on those nights, frightened by our own shadows and imagined night sounds*. [Deborah]

Dyanis has similar memories, though from the 1980s when life was a little more hectic, and when children spent a lot more time watching television:

> *My grandmother would often sit, surrounded by my cousins and I, regaling us with fanciful tales of the supernatural and of traditions that sounded far away to our young ears. We didn't have satellite television like some of my friends, so we only ever watched TV for Sesame Street or in passing while my grandparents were watching the news. The stories were often spontaneous, and intended to correct inappropriate behaviour. I learned to not speak to strangers, to not make my going and comings common knowledge, and to tell the truth through the unfortunate circumstances suffered by many in these tales. I spent many summers at the mouth of the Marianne River in Blanchisseuse, cautious not to offend Mama Dlo lest she drag me down to a watery grave*. [Dyanis]

Similar to Dyanis, Lisa spent her vacations with her grandmother who often shared stories of folklore:

> *On evenings while she was cooling her tea (pouring from cup to cup) she would tell us stories. I heard about the douens (and my cousin would tease me about it because I wasn't baptised as a baby). She also told us about Papa Bois, the obeah woman, the La Diablesse, and the soucouyant. My parents use to joke about the soucouyant and remind us that if there were any blue marks on our bodies it was because of it. I was so paranoid that on mornings I would look at myself in the mirror to make sure there were no blue marks. She also told us that she had a black statue of a small man that was stored in my uncle's room. Whenever we misbehaved she would threaten to take it out. The stories she told about the statue are now forgotten but I do remember being afraid of it. While reading "The Mermaid Twin Sister" I recalled that memory and another about why we should not go to the beach on Easter Sunday.* [Lisa]

Antonia, who experienced a distinctly rural lifestyle, associates her earliest recollections with her mother:

> *My mother loved to tell stories, particularly scary ones when we were being bad. So we've heard about douens and how they lure children away. One day when I was about 5 years old I came from school with my little brother. Mom wasn't home so we thought she went by the river to wash and decided to go to that wooded area to find her. She wasn't there but all along the way we kept an eye out for douens and Papa Bois and when we reached the river we looked out for mermaids. Many nights we'd be looking out for all the characters to come out, especially the soucouyants*. [Antonia]

For Dennis, he points out that folklore goes beyond folktales for him. It also incorporates all that is reflective of what is Trinidad, from stick fighting to chutney. Dennis, also from a rural background, associates his earliest recollection of folktales with his paternal grandmother. Often when she visited from central Trinidad, she would share stories. These mostly centred on the Immortelle Tree and La Diablesses:

> *The scariest part for me wasn't the stories but afterwards. Whenever she was ready to retire to bed, as the eldest I would be expected to escort her back to my uncle's house with either a flambeaux or later on a small flashlight. Walking with her was okay since it was only a five-minute walk. Walking back to my home wasn't. I recall once my cousin draped in a white sheet jumped out of the bushes at me. It almost became a serious incident as I tossed the flambeaux at him in fear.*
>
> *On the other hand, fear of these encounters prompted me to learn the Psalms, recite the 'Lord's Prayer,' or the 'Rosary,' or keep some salt or rice in my pockets. These were key tools for fending off these characters.* [Dennis]

Representations of the Folk Experience

Reading and re-reading some folk narratives through the books for the first time as adults also provided many childhood flashbacks and the recognition that Caribbean folk narratives are still represented via the oral tradition. Most times, such stories are passed from generation to generation, grandmother to granddaughter, or aunt to niece. The stories are all passed from old to young. Though from different eras, such recollections and stories share many similarities and purposes. For example, these tales were often used to entertain young girls during a lengthy hair braiding process, while using the opportunity to instil the virtues of being kind, respectful, courageous, charitable, or honourable.

For Deborah and Dyanis, it was also about how you treat others. Deborah recalls how strongly the message of being kindhearted to the elderly resonated with her even as a child. She still holds the view that good things follow you when you show kindness to the elderly; that respecting your authority figures advances your personal goals; and that unexpected yet pleasant rewards were usually disguised as hard work. For Dyanis, the lessons also tended to be about resilience and inner harmony.

Lisa made special mention of Besson's *The Voice in the Govi*:

> *[That] even though there were persons with different beliefs about folklore or religion, the community found a way to navigate, even harmonize what might appear to be divergent concepts. Both beliefs, the folkloric and the Catholicism were respected and co-existed beautifully among community members*. [Lisa]

Antonia noted how the authors used humour, illustrations, and tried to balance the use of local idioms:

> *The writers try to keep the original language of the story including dialect, phrase, etc. in hopes of passing on these stories as accurately as possible or with the hope of giving the readers an authentic folklore/folktale experience, including the moral.* [Antonia]

Representations of the folk experience for Dennis centred on issues of cultural oppression, including the use of religion, and the resilience of the resistance to this dominated classes. For him, the way that marginalized and minority groups protected their sense of identity through folktales and folklore is something to celebrate:

> *Are we as educators doing enough to recognize and celebrate Al Ramsawak, Freddy Kissoon, Enid Kirton, Philip Sherlock, Michael Anthony, and Eintou Springer and others like them in our midst who strive to keep the folk engaged and the stories not just told but revisited and considered?* [Dennis]

His concern is whether citizens and educators are conscious of the lessons to be learned from the folk:

> *Can we see how folklore might have shifted from an emphasis on survival and fear in our past lives as house slave, field slave, or indentured labourer? Indeed the fight for survival is still real. Can we see folklore now as a means of celebrating who we are as community, recognize our rich diversity, and sustain national identity? If we can see, then these stories serve as the glue for the nation.* [Dennis]

The co-authors all celebrate their love of folklore and their readiness to consider the lessons learned from folktales. Deborah and Antonia, for example, have been deliberately sharing these stories to yet another generation of their families, while other respondents apply these lessons to their extended family members and students.

Representations of Historical and Cultural Realities

Reminiscing on her very early readings of Al Ramsawak's folktales in the newspapers when she was growing up, Deborah found pleasure in re-reading the folktales. For her, the simple wisdom in the stories of Anansi or those that explained everyday mysteries, like "How the crab got a cracked back," can bring not just comedic relief but many teaching opportunities with students.

Dyanis and Dennis connected particularly with the historical elements. What stood out most for Dyanis was Besson's portrayal of east Port of Spain:

> *Picturing nineteenth century George Street, with which I am quite familiar, having family members from Laventille, was quite an experience. Besson gives a rich blend of history that reminds us of a country and city where African religions merged with Christianity; where multiple languages and accents punctured the atmosphere that included Venezuelan, African, European, Asian, and regional voices. As a language lover this was so memorable.* [Dyanis]

Dyanis also appreciated the rich source of material for understanding folktales and folklore from both Afro- and Indo-centric perspectives, and how these evolved to work like Haynes' (2010) that centred on the contemporary.

> *I really appreciated, too, the rich style of Paramasad's work, particularly "Rites of the Dead" and Mahabir's use of both the Trinidad Creole of the original dialect as well as Standard English*. [Dyanis]

Antonia shared that the cultural reality for her is how much of the material centred on the evil associated with the characters:

> *Of course you were not just helpless in the face of such evil. There are things that can be used to help you get rid of or ward off the evil. So having salt on your person provided a remedy for the soucouyant, usually found living by silk cotton trees. I also couldn't help but notice how fear was used as a tool to keep children safe*

> *from perceived danger as well as to manage children's misbehaviour.* [Antonia]

For Lisa, it seemed like folktales were used to explain any unusual occurrences as well as to pass on age-old advice by invoking fear or giving warnings. These are also ways of keeping religious beliefs, customs, and rituals of our ancestors alive. Lisa noted many cultural elements in the materials:

> *I can identify with the story of La Divina Pastora ("Catholic Hindus" who are devoted to her) and the story of the Pitch Lake in Haynes' "Sapotee Soil." The ritual of the dead in Besson's "The Voice in the Govi" reminded me of Catholic rituals and the Virgin Mary. I read about the Temple in the Sea and the story behind it and I have visited the temple on several occasions with my nieces and nephew.* [Lisa]

Lisa, who lives in central Trinidad, found that Haynes' story about "The Haunted Highway" resonated particularly well with her: "*Living in Couva and going to south I cannot help but remember that story.*" For Lisa, the story brought a richer appreciation of her community as she reflected on the era and the social dynamics addressed in the story: "*Often students do not have an understanding of their community's past. There are no village and municipal museums to go to.*"

Celebrating Folklore in the Classroom

The co-researchers, all teachers, determined that the experience of reading the folk narratives provided much evidence to vigorously utilize such narratives in the classroom. From their responses, four strands emerged that represent a rationale for using folklore. These include the role of folklore in:

- valuing community diversity through multicultural education
- connecting to our ancestral culture
- community building
- transformative potential of individuals and communities

Valuing All Through Multicultural Education

The multi-ethnic and multi-racial fabric of the Caribbean often faces many socio-cultural challenges. In relatively young nations like Trinidad and Tobago, racially and ethnically diverse groups often co-exist peacefully, while at the same time maintaining a *mutual suspicion* that can affect all

areas of society. These burgeoning societies must both carefully examine the country's historical sociology of race and foster space for community members to process views on race (Henry, 1994).

We, the co-researchers, advocate a broad view of understanding diversity that goes beyond race and ethnicity to include other macro and micro cultures, such as gender, ability, and religion; and assert that a critical multicultural education is essential both to the task of nation building and to the learning and development of the country's youth.

Folk narratives are tools that can be used within multicultural education to foster social and institutional reform, as it provides teachers and learners a space for active discourse and dialogue around historical and contemporary issues. In order to pursue these goals and avoid *othering* groups or trivializing experiences, we support the use of critical thinking and critical pedagogy in the classroom as the means by which we can explore this resource and approach the social action advocated in the highest level of Banks' (2004) model of infusing multicultural education into the curriculum. Caribbean countries are multicultural nations where critical pedagogy should embrace multiculturalism and focus on the subtle workings of racism, sexism, class bias, and cultural oppression (Hamer, 2000; Kincheloe, 2008).

Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge is constructed and legitimized by and within the dominant culture. It stands in direct contrast with banking education (Freire, 1970), in which the teacher is the source of all knowledge and the student little more than a receptacle in which this knowledge is placed. Instead, it embraces the concept of liberating education, consisting of acts of cognition, and the use of problem-posing education, which encourages dialogue and resists the dichotomization of classroom roles. As a tool of critical pedagogy, problem-posing education provides the space for teachers and students to critically observe and recognize "*the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; [and] they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 83, original emphasis).

In combination with folk narratives, critical pedagogical techniques can offer a unique view into a community's history and the origins of many contemporary challenges and tensions, and can be an important factor of mental decolonization. Caribbean folktales implicitly explore social norms and values, often presenting intersections of daily life and the supernatural. These representations, often of former slaves and indentured labourers, generally include aspects of oral performance and written creole, and sometimes present a contradiction with many students' contemporary lives. As we explore the use of this genre in Caribbean classrooms and

beyond, we highlight specific narratives as examples and starting points, but we by no means suggest that this research was an exhaustive exploration.

Not often considered within the realm of high-culture literature, folklore can nevertheless be used in educational settings to develop and maintain a sense of community (local to global), and to increase critical consciousness in an active citizenry:

> *Toward this purpose, teachers and students, both participating as learners, can use classic folklore involving supernatural characters like Papa Bois, Douennes, and La Diablesse as well as contemporary novels and short stories that reference or are inspired by folklore. They can be used as voices for the Other. So, for example, Papa Bois can make his case for why Afro-, Indo-Trinidadian, or Caribbean people need to take care of the forest as the protector of its ancestral memories. Or the Midnight Robber can be a messenger reminding us of 'Mother Trinidad and Tobago' or sharing the message of the controversial Jahagi Bhai calypso*. [Dennis]

Although easiest to adapt and explore in literature, history, and social studies classes, we also encourage educators beyond the humanities to integrate these stories as well. Exploring the defeat of a soucouyant by having her count innumerable grains of rice before sunrise in math class, or the effects of salt and pepper on her discarded skin in the sciences, can lend a new, exciting, and locally connected facet to traditional instruction.

Connecting to Our Ancestral Culture

More than just continuing these folkloric art forms into the future, folk narratives tie us to our histories; without understanding our histories, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes as our forebears. Both oral and written folklore help communities and groups pass traditions, warnings, and numerous other aspects of culture across generations. For the African diaspora, stories of the evils of salt and the journey *back home* are common (Anatol, 2000; Besson, 2011a) and even as a Shango Queen lay dying in *The Voice In the Govi* (Besson, 2011b), she reminisces about going *back home* to Africa. Besson's (2011b) penetrating account of life in 19th century Trinidad shares about a time largely forgotten. This is a period when the old ways and the new ways were starting to meld. Language itself was a blend of:

> . . . the French of the Languedoc, Mandarin Chinese . . . obscure African languages, Castilian Spanish, public school English, the

> incomprehensible gibberish of the blacks, Creole Patois, High and Low German, broken English, the Arabic of the Mandingoes, Scottish oaths, Irish lullabies, Carib cuss words, and a Venezuelan twang that would linger on for centuries in the foothills of the Northern Range. (p. 35)

This successful blend of contemporary fictional literature, the vernacular, and colonial history lends an authenticity to the novel, and invites English Literature teachers in the Caribbean to explore both home culture and the finer points of creative writing using the same text:

> *The "Voice in the Govi" provided me with important cultural perspectives .For example the Jab Molassi or Molasses Devil character in modern Carnival, according to the character La Serene Rosa on page 82, has its roots to the ghost of a cane plantation slave who had fallen (through torture and punishment) into a vat of boiling molasses. The ghost, restrained by the chains of his imps, dances to the beat of African drums ready to coat the unaware with the hot substance*. [Dyanis]

Besson (2011b) describes, too, the traditional burial methods of the indigenous Caribs, and uses both the old French names of towns and streets as well as the more recent English versions, taking the reader through the transformation of Calle de San José to La Rue de la Place, and later still to its current form, George Street.

Although a large number of these stories trace their roots to the African continent, the Indian diaspora too brought their cultural traditions across stormy seas. In *Salt and Roti*, Parmasad (1984) tells a short story "Rites of the Dead," which explores several aspects of Indo-immigrant culture. In the midst of its comedic ending, readers get to explore the death rites of burning the body at the river, praying with the pundit, and using ghee and incense as part of the ceremony. He infuses Hindu words to reflect the culture and language of the community, blending humour with the traditional folkloric goals of teaching morals, behaviours, and customs.

Mahabir (2005) also explores this colonial blend in his book *Caribbean Indian Folktales*, which presents each story in both the original dialect and the Standard English form, and proffers stories from five different Caribbean islands. In a story of family and forgiveness entitled "The King and His Seven Daughters," Mahabir replicates the spoken rhythm and rhyme of the elderly Trinidadian narrator:

> It did have a king. And he ha' seven daughta. An' de king call he seven daughta one day an' he sit dong. An' he aksin' he daughta an' dem, "Wit' who luck you livin'?" (p. 74).

Then he re-writes the narrative in Standard English, facilitating the goal listed on the back cover of being able to use the book to promote multicultural understanding, and as a language and literature textbook:

> There was once a king who had seven daughters. One day he called his seven daughters, and when they came, he sat down and asked them, "With whose grace are you living?" (p. 76)

Dyanis adds:

> *I found particular delight in how Mahabir, in the story "Churi's Deception," used code switches between English and Hindi, connecting ancestral and colonial languages. We need to see more of this, even in our vernacular/indigenous music like Parang or Chutney.* [Dyanis]

Classic legends and folklore can also be used to explore culture and language, but they are better representations of our past than our present. Besson (2011a), historian and folklorist, while sharing traditional folktales, also provides the reader with much historical context. He shows how so many of these stories connect to the hardships of colonial life and the dangers of travelling through lawless colonies at night. Many of the stories have warnings of night-time dangers.

NALIS (2011) documents Indo-Trinidadian folklore that is distinct from the more common stories discussed above. These stories may be significantly more popular within the Hindu community than within the general Trinidadian population, but this distinction could be due to the fact that many Hindu communities remained relatively isolated into the 20th century. We can read about the protector of the land, *Dee Baba*, who takes the form of a colonial slave master (a white man on a black horse), and the appropriate offerings for his protection. This story is a great example of how tales brought from India were adapted to reflect the realities of their new society. Could this imagery have been due to the tensions initially experienced between former slaves and newly arrived indentured labourers?

We contend that teachers and students as learners can create a space for dialogue around many of these representations, with the intent of co-constructing meaning. Deborah shares an important perspective:

> *As the written history of slaves and indentured labourers is sparse, this type of critical reflection and analysis of local folklore can allow students space and time to explore the traditions of their ancestors, how those traditions affected colonial life, and how they still affect our contemporary society*. [Deborah]

Community Building

Caribbean folk narratives incorporate the spoken, written, and performance arts. Not only can students explore the art form of storytelling, they can also enhance these readings with interpretations and the use of actors, as with the Idakeda projects, thus recreating the story's most intriguing visual effects. In addition, the written form of the stories can facilitate student understanding of both creative writing and the role and forms of dialect within colonial and post-colonial times. Students can gain appreciation for both the oral and written vernacular as a cultural tradition and art form, rather than as something that must be altered and gentrified for public consumption.

Paul Keens-Douglas and Miguel Browne are two well-known contemporary Trinidadian poets and storytellers who are continuing this art form and are good models of the artistic applications of creole culture and language. Both men actively use the vernacular in their poetry, highlighting the sound structure in the dialect and attempting to capture the "tonal quality of [Caribbean] expressions without which so much of our telling would be lost" (Browne, 2001, p. 4). The rhythm and tone of both Keens-Douglas' standard and vernacular English echo throughout our childhoods, and his stories have become entwined with Trinidadian culture, extending into his annual Talk Tent, with its motto *Talk is Art.* Talk Tent provides a forum for talk artists to highlight a variety of oral traditions and continue telling stories that would otherwise be lost to time. Browne (2001) explores and supports the idea of dialect as art form in his poem *Trini Talk:*

> But of all de special talents dat we Trinis possess,
> Is de way we talk dat ranks us among de bes . . .
> . . . Look at de many words dat we Trinis create,
> Jus' to make it easier for us to communicate.
> Words like bobbol, skylark, commess and bobolee,
> Are words dat yuh cah find in any English dictionary.
> Coskel, boobooloops, lahay and dingolay.
> Mou Mou, bazodie, jagabat and tooltoolbay.
> So when yuh fat or overweight, we say yuh obzokee.
> And when something small, we say chinkey instead.
> And we say tabanca when a woman tie up a man head.
> And a person who lazy, we call dem a locho.
> And an inquisitive person is simply a maco . . . (Browne, 2001, p. 11)

Then, too, hearing and discussing the folktales that apply to your own community is just as stimulating. Lisa, on reading the story about Couva in Haynes (2010), shares:

> *. . . living in Couva and going to south regularly I cannot help but remember the story she wrote about it . . . the love story about a sugar plantation owner's daughter and the worker. It reminds me that people lived and died where we travel everyday . . . the bigger picture.* [Lisa]

The authors of the narratives we considered are among many others who have combined the art of spoken word and the rhythm of local dialect into an art all its own and a symbol of national pride. Folk narratives, then, whether relating to traditional supernatural tales or contemporary literature, lend themselves to political commentary, providing a similar forum for artists to share personal perspectives or the general sentiments of the *folk*. For example, Antonia shares:

> *Further benefits include critical thinking, as students are required to think deeply about what is meant by the story, as most can't be taken literally. I have used approaches embedded in dramatic strategies that might involve role-play, reading theatre, music, and even dance. Recently I have been exploring the character the Midnight Robber using student and teacher constructed narrative that exaggerates while bringing attention to important issues*. [Antonia]

Exploring the realm of crime and politics, a character in Edmund Narine's (2011) short story expresses the sentiment that "everybody blaming the government for crime, but nobody looking at what they as individuals doing about crime. Crime is not only the government problem, crime is everybody problem" (p. 51). The reader is then drawn into community negotiations on the process necessary for changing their socio-economic circumstances. Stories such as these reflect the turbulence of the times and the reality of actualizing social change; they can lend voice to the unspoken, and provide a foundation for dialogue, the development of community, and important morality and values. Lisa elaborates:

> *Most of the folktales are stories that carry a moral with it, like being honest, being generous, etc. These are values that are incorporated with our Health and Family Life Education syllabus in Trinidad. These stories can help teachers pass on these virtues. In "Sapotee Soil," in particular, the stories are based in different parts of Trinidad. The author allows the reader to get a map of Trinidad and*

> *locate the places the stories took place. So folklore can be taught in collaboration with Social Studies.* [Lisa]

Transformative Potential

Discussions of history, culture, and language alone will not lead today's youth on a path to critical consciousness. The goal is not reached just because the learner feels connected through their participation, and is able to engage in critical analysis and collective discourse. More than just having an exciting look at history and culture, and maybe a moving discussion, how can we take the next step toward contemporary social change? How can we support students as they discover their own transformative potential, while simultaneously discovering that power in ourselves? Critical consciousness itself is not the end goal. This process of transformation is an essential part of critical consciousness as we, as individuals and as a community, move towards social change. Freire (1970) notes that the type of action we adopt is directly related to the way we perceive ourselves in the world. Before we can encourage social change, we must look critically at our perceptions and the direct and indirect messages learned through the stories—both fictional and non-fictional—of our histories.

Social change in itself is quite a broad topic and a potentially daunting endeavour. Investigating the ways in which our folk narratives present and influence our realities can help us to determine the direction to take and the steps we need in order to get there. The actions needed as we move toward transforming our realities are specific to the community in which we reside. There is no magic formula but, rather, this process unfolds through critical thinking and open dialogue. Towards deciding which topics warrant a discussion regarding this potential social change, Dennis suggests that:

> *What is needed to nurture and sustain the transformational potential is a level of analysis illustrating and requiring an even deeper look at the possibly hidden or lost messages in textbooks and popular media. Consider, for example, the story of "How the Agouti Lost its Tail." This can be revisited as a story of marginalization, desperation, and resistance. It's not just about the comedic. It can be about power, gender, disability, and inclusion . . . it is about our desire to belong, to not be excluded*. [Dennis]

This approach, along with active problem posing (Freire, 1970), will promote the idea of teachers and students as co-researchers exploring the world through the curriculum. As discussed above, problem posing rejects

the notion of the teacher transferring information to students, but rather fosters critical questioning, discussion, and analysis.

Rather than just noting the physical and role descriptions of the legend of Papa Bois, father of the woods, and the French connections indicated by his name, teachers and learners can look at the finer details of the full legend and the fact that in older versions of the folktale, Papa Bois was noted as having arrived on the island as a man with no name or one that was suppressed or unknown. This story mirrors the advent of the African slaves on our shores, and can be explored further to include the connections between those peoples and the land on which they worked, lived, and sometimes hid.

As an additional example relating to this process, Dyanis asserts:

> *Instead of the teacher telling students how that is culturally relevant, he/she can participate as a learner in a discussion about the meaning(s) of namelessness as it relates to the story, to the island's colonial history, and potentially to contemporary society. What about the role of the Catholic church, or religion in general, as saviour in the stories of the unbaptized Douens, or the message and histories behind the vilification of women in the stories of the La Diablesse, Soucouyant, Churile, and Saapin, just to name a few?* [Dyanis]

Potential topics for discussion abound and can even go beyond analysis of the actual content to include the language used in the writing of these tales at various stages in Caribbean history. How and why does the use of the vernacular change in versions of classic literature, or even more contemporary novels? What are the cultural values inherent in the use of the vernacular as an art form? How are other, smaller community groups represented, if at all? Developing critical consciousness through the use of folk narratives in the classroom can foster the opportunity for students at any level of schooling to use these creative tales for critical analysis of society past and present, the discussion of connections to their contemporary lives, and the presentation of options for change.

Discussion and Implications

Having recalled their childhood experiences of folktales, and after considering the lessons they associate with these recollections, the co-researchers set about reading a collection of 15 folk narratives. These comprised literary collections of folktales and folklore referenced fiction. The co-researchers, all teachers, considered how these narratives might be used in their classrooms (Hamer, 2000).

The co-researchers unanimously agreed that the very reading of the narratives proved invigorating. Further, as these apply to teaching, they felt inspired and shared the perspective that using such folk narratives foster opportunities to engage students through humour; enhance communication and storytelling; and contribute to a sense of identity, cultural enrichment, and historicity. These also provide a space through which students can explore narratives for reading and comprehension, as they relate and refer to contemporary society and potential social change. Students can explore historical perspectives, often unwritten or under-addressed, towards *knowing* themselves (as individuals and community members). The narratives might also limit the new colonization developing through the overwhelming popularity of American pop culture (Haynes, 2011). The Idakeda group and Eintou Springer's efforts at cultural education through Anansi and other dramatic forms provide examples of how such performed folk narratives can engage students and facilitate both critical thinking and educated citizens (Gordon, 2011; Springer, 2011).

Folk narratives not only have the potential to redefine community, they also provide "an inherently interdisciplinary body of authentic context and skill-building methodologies of documentation and analysis" (Bowman, 2006, p. 69) that can be integrated into existing curricula and educational outcomes. Ivey (2011) notes that rarely a day goes by without noticeable benefits of having a knowledge and understanding of folklore in his life. He asserts that folklore plays an important role in the development of thinkers and activists.

Connected to unearthing one's position in the current social culture, we assert that critical analysis, collective discussions, and problem posing are essential to the development of this local consciousness, and that the use of folk narratives is an appropriate, culturally relevant pedagogical tool. This method of instruction should not be reduced to a "process of socialization in enlightenment thinking" (Margonis, 2003, p. 149), as we are not telling students what and how to think but, rather, participating in the construction of knowledge. Though much more exploration is needed, we feel that using local and online resources like Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students (C.A.R.T.S) can be beneficial to all participants (http://www.carts.org/). As a path to awareness of self and community, folk narratives are indispensable as new generations navigate their role(s) in a changing global climate.

We invite our colleagues on the front line of classrooms to embrace folk narratives, such as those we considered, as a means of engaging students. We remind them that education is more than just high-stakes testing. It is about understanding who we are, where we have come from,

where we are going (Hamer, 2000). It's about valuing others, connecting to our ancestral and contemporary culture, community building, and our sense of self and identity (Chevalier, 1995). Folk narratives, including the lyrics of calypsoes and rapso, need to be archived and accessed. While some rapsos can be acquired via the 3 Canal website (http://www.3canal.com/) and spoken word via the 2 Cents Movement (https://www.facebook.com/The2CentsMovement), community-generated memorized narratives, and the lyrics of folkloric characters like the Midnight Robber are still elusive. These narratives, along with literacy skill development (Herrero (2006), production skills development and performance, are all transformative opportunities to be grasped. We argue that folk narratives offer a means of enhancing student engagement and achievement (Ezeigbo, 2013).

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AWARENESS OF AND RESPONSIVENESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
Views From Secondary School Students in Trinidad and Tobago

Rawatee Maharaj-Sharma

In a study in Trinidad and Tobago involving 176 secondary school students aged 15-17 years, it was found that 90% of the group had a good working knowledge about environmental issues. More students from rural schools were found to be personally aware of specific environmental issues in their communities, while more urban students indicated that they had done something tangible about one or more environmental issues. The students were surveyed by way of a 2-sectioned attitudinal-based opinionnaire, which gauged general knowledge and awareness in the first section and students' responsiveness in the second section. The results showed the while both urban and rural students were highly aware of environmental issues, rural students were slightly more responsive to these issues. A small percentage of students in this work were found to have a weak knowledge base about environmental issues, were generally indifferent to environmental issues within their communities, and had never been involved in any initiative on environmental matters.

Introduction

At the global level, environmental awareness of students is a major focus of many physical, biological, and earth sciences programmes, as well as all geography and environmental education programmes. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) advocated that targeting young persons and getting them to think critically about environmental issues is a priority, while at the 5th World Economic and Environmental Conference (Zaleznik, 2012) it was suggested that the development of environmentally sensitive attitudes among students is important for the development of positive environmental behaviours in later life. There is, at present, active debate on the various activities, experiences, and understandings that influence the development of these attitudes. The print and electronic media continue to do an excellent job of sensitizing the global community about current environmental threats and environmental disasters around the world. So that while students are exposed to environmental issues in the

formal classroom setting they are also bombarded with information about the environment via television, newspapers, and other ICT devices (Giannoulis, 2010). Schools and other educational institutions, particularly at the secondary level, are making conscious efforts to infuse environment sensitization initiatives into their curriculum; either formally, by insisting that students do projects and/or write reports about environmental issues; or informally, by encouraging students to interact with the environment through participation in field trips, hiking, and camping exercises, as well as getting involved in community environmental advocacy groups. (Stevenson, 2007).

Environmental awareness has only recently found its way to the frontlines for consideration by planners and policymakers in Trinidad and Tobago. Against the background of this new insight, the science curriculum at every level of the primary and secondary school system in Trinidad and Tobago has an element of environmental education built into the relevant science syllabus documents. The earlier inadvertent neglect of environmental matters in Trinidad and Tobago is linked to the historical industrialized nature of the country's economy, which over the years continued with only little consideration for the environment. The current decline in the country's non-renewable resources is now forcing planners to seriously consider economic diversification, and one of the major considerations in the country's current economic diversification thrust is environmental conservation and environmental preservation.

In light of this shift, conscious efforts are being made to trigger environmental awareness among the population by targeting the education system of the country. Teachers are being encouraged more and more to raise environmental issues in their classroom, and to engage students in learning activities that will impress in their minds the importance of conserving and preserving the environment (Maharaj-Sharma, 2010). The challenge, however, remains to ensure that even after students develop a respect for the environment that it translates into environmentally sensitive behaviours in their everyday lives. To that end, some of the daily newspapers carry an environment feature on a weekly basis (e.g., *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*), and schools are encouraged to get copies of the newspapers so that students can have easy access to information. Some media houses have made special efforts to ensure that print media are delivered to schools (urban and rural) that have made a request for this delivery service. In addition, all media houses have been open, fair, articulate, and factual in their reporting of environmental issues when they arise, either locally or internationally, so that there is ample opportunity for the population to be well informed. Recently, too, with the institutionalization of the government's laptop initiative for all secondary

school students (Trinidad and Tobago. Ministry of Education, 2010), all students have access to laptops and/or mobile devices. With this increased accessibility, more and more students across the country have begun to avail themselves of several environmental applications that they access easily on their laptops and/or mobile electronic devices. "One Small Act," for example, is an application created by NBCUniversal that informs students about what they can do to "green" their lives, and the impact it can have on their lives and on the environment. The app allows users to set goals, track their progress, and share changes they have made and actions they have taken on behalf of the environment.

Against this background, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that students in Trinidad and Tobago ought to be knowledgeable about and aware of environmental issues. Access to information is relatively easy, and formal curriculum instruction facilitates knowledge acquisition and encourages students to have an opinion on environmental issues and to become responsive to them. What is uncertain, however, is the extent to which the available information is making an impact on students and, therefore, what degree of awareness about environmental issues actually exists among the students. Even if students are knowledgeable and aware, it is unclear how involved, responsive, and proactive they are about environmental issues. These two uncertainties are what motivated this current work.

The aim of this work therefore is to reveal what levels of environmental awareness exist among secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago and, further, to report on students' responsiveness in the face of environmental issues. The following research questions guided the approach adopted in this work:

1. *How aware of environmental issues are secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago?*
2. *How responsive to environmental issues are secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago?*

This work comes at a time when the global community is struggling to manage a number of environmental issues ranging from excessive snowfall and flooding to raging bush fires and chemical spills. Experts have indicated clearly that these are all linked in some way to the consequences of less than responsible actions and environmentally unfriendly behaviours of human beings. There is the speculation that man has not been sensitized enough about the severe implications their everyday activities and daily habits have on the environment, and there is a strong suggestion that it is necessary for us all to think carefully about

how we view the environment and about what we are prepared to do to preserve it for future generations.

Literature Review

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behavior (TBP), as articulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Armitage and Conner (1999) respectively, were used as a framework in understanding, explaining, and interpreting students' responses and their inferred behaviours. The theories are based on the following two assumptions: 1) that individual behavioural intentions are directly associated with their levels of knowledge, awareness, and willingness to act in response to a cause or an event (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980); and 2) an individual's determination is influenced by personal attitude, social support, and perceived behavioural norms (Armitage & Conner, 1999). In light of these assumptions, these theories allow for the examination of the behaviour of humans in the context of their levels of knowledge and awareness, and therefore makes them suitable for the exploration of students' awareness and responsiveness to environmental issues addressed in this work.

Today the global community is plagued by various environmental nuances, and many researchers are convinced that these are as a result of irresponsible environmental behaviour, which is influenced by the extent to which environmental concerns matter to people (Meinhold & Malkus, 2005). This recognition prompted experts in the field of environmental education to look closely at environmental education programmes to determine the extent to which such offerings are aimed at raising awareness, and to urge those who participate in the programmes to adopt steadfast positions on critical environmental issues (DiEnno & Hilton, 2005; Lee, 2008). Many of these studies are aimed at gauging how young people view the environment, and about revealing what everyday activities, practices, and habits they engage in and the impact of these on the environment (Plamberg & Kuru, 2000; Selvam & Abdul Nazar, 2011).

In a 1996 study conducted by Morris and Schagen, a survey of roughly 1,000 15-year-old students revealed that only 34% regarded environmental issues as a "very serious" issue. More recent works, however, by Abraham and Arjunan (2005) and Khan (2013), have found that there is a strong positive correlation between students' exposure to environmental education and their subsequent environmental behaviour. More specifically, Khan (2013) revealed that students with a strong environmental education background had a significantly higher positive environmental attitude, and that their willingness to pursue environmental causes was overtly obvious.

The results of a nonequivalent control group design used by Hsu (2010) to investigate the effects of an environmental education course on students' responsible environmental behaviour showed that the course significantly promoted students' responsible behaviour, their perceived knowledge of environmental issues, their intention to act on behalf of the environment, and their perceived knowledge of and skills in using environmental action strategies. An instructive notion from that work is that public environmental education, environmental awareness, and personal proactive environmental responsibility are key factors in any attempt to maintain a proper environmental balance and to ensure sustainable development.

Maharaj-Sharma (2010) pointed out that this environmental drive is somewhat subdued in Trinidad and Tobago, but given the current global urgency to focus on environmental preservation in the larger context of sustainable development, Trinidad and Tobago is re-examining its role and responsibility toward that ultimate goal. As a result, and taking the lead from leaders in the promotion of sustainable development (Sterling, 2004), Trinidad and Tobago has begun to make incremental changes to its national vision and outlook on matters related to the environment (Trinidad and Tobago. Government & United Nations Development Programme, 2003). This position therefore makes the current work both timely and instructive.

Methodology

Participants

A group of 176 secondary school students, all in their 5th year of secondary schooling, participated in this work. Their ages ranged between 15 and 17 and the group consisted of 92 girls and 84 boys. The group was a mixed one, in terms of ethnicity, geographical origin, academic ability, and social standing. The students were randomly selected from 8 purposively selected schools across Trinidad and Tobago (4 urban schools and 4 rural schools). In the Trinidad and Tobago context, an urban school is defined as a school within a 12 km radius of any major city, borough, or town; and a rural school is defined as a school that is located outside a 12 km radius from any major city, borough, or town (Maharaj-Sharma, 2007).[1]

Twenty-two students each from the eight schools were selected by the class teachers and invited to participate in the research. To reduce sampling bias in the selection of the participants, the hat-and-draw method was used to select the students from each class to ensure that each student in each class had an equal chance of being selected to participate, and that

each selection was purely by chance. Parental permission was subsequently sought for the students' participation, and once this was obtained, the nature of the research and their role in the process were explained to the students. The group therefore contained 88 students from a rural setting and 88 students from an urban setting.

The Instrument

The initial opinionnaire was prepared using the rigorous iterative procedure for item development as described by Agrawal (2005) and Brandon (1998). Statements that prompted emotive responses were developed along the lines of the item development checklist prescribed by Brandon (1998). The opinionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section (Section A) was designed using the Likert-type model (Oppenheim, 1986) and comprised 15 statements about environmental awareness, which sought to elicit from students the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The first 10 statements focused on general environmental issues linked to knowledge about and awareness of environmental matters, and about the impact of behaviours and practices on the environment. The latter five statements in this section (Section A) were personal, and sought to prompt students to reflect on their own beliefs and practices in relation to the environment.

In Section B of the opinionnaire, 8 responsive behaviours were presented (each as a statement of action) and students were asked to respond *yes* or *no* to indicate which of the actions they had taken on behalf of environmental issues in their community. The opinionnaire was reviewed by a language specialist (a colleague of the researcher) to correct for ambiguities in the statements. Feedback received was used to rephrase several of the statements in Section A of the opinionnaire. Once the final version of the opinionniare was ready, it was piloted with a group of 30 secondary school students with demographics similar to those of the participants in this work. Results from the pilot indicated that students had no difficulties interpreting the statements presented on the opinionnaire. They provided responses to all statements on the opinionnaire.

Research Design

This study proceed via a quantitative exploratory approach. An explorative approach was selected because the current work is concerned primarily with discovery and attempting to gain insights, with the researcher being the explorer. Stebbins (2001) describes this as social inquiry of the kind in which a perspective, a claim, a supposition, or a dilemma is presented in

order to prompt the articulation or the emergence of "a state of mind" or "a special personal orientation."

Data Analysis

Section A of the opinionnaire, which consisted of 15 questions rated on a Likert-type scale, was quantified to reflect students' responses in respect of their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements presented. Each statement had an assigned score ranging from 1 to 5, with *1* representing strongest disagreement and *5* representing strongest agreement with the statement, so that the closer the mean was to 5 for a particular statement, the higher was students' agreement with the statement. Some questions were worded in negative form so that the score was reversed for analysis. This was done to prevent students from developing a stereotyped response set where a pattern developed, such as agreeing (or disagreeing) with all the statements (Babbie, 1998). Section B comprised 8 action statements for which *yes* or *no* responses were analysed. Descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyse the data obtained from Section A, while inferential statistical methods were used to analyse data from Section B. Rich descriptive text, which sought to reveal personal orientation and firm personal views as described by Stebbins' (2001) deep social inquiry, was used to critically describe the findings generated from the quantitative explorations. This approach reinforced and qualitatively substantiated the quantitative findings. The data were analysed in three strands:

1. Strand 1 – Environmental issues linked to knowledge about environmental matters and about the impact of behaviours and practices on the environment
2. Strand 2 – Students' reflection on their own beliefs and practices in relation to the environment
3. Strand 3 – Actions students have taken on behalf of environmental issues in their community

Results

This work revealed that between the urban and rural populations there were only two areas in which students' views were statistically significantly different:

1. The belief that plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist – rural students scored a collective higher mean than their urban counterparts

2. The belief that environmental education is as important as any other curriculum in school – again rural students scored a collective higher mean than urban students

In all other areas, however, while the views of urban and rural students varied, the variation was not statistically significant. The sections that follow detail the views of urban and rural students in each of the three strands indicated above.

Strands 1 and 2

The results show that in respect of environmental issues linked to knowledge about environmental matters, and about the impact of behaviours and practices on the environment, students were very much aware of issues that affect the environment and about behaviours and practices that are detrimental to the environment. Many students from both localities held strong views about conserving/preserving the environment for future generations. Students were generally well aware of and highly responsive to environmental causes, with clear indications that they had either taken action or were prepared to take action on behalf of the environment.

Table I presents mean scores (x), standard deviation, SD, and respective t-values for each school type.

Awareness of environmental issues

The data in Table 1 show that students from both localities had a high level of environmental awareness and a high level of favourable beliefs and practices in relation to the environment. The mean (x) values were for all the students in each locality. Awareness linked to information presented through the print and electronic media was high among students, there being no statistical difference between the means for both populations. However, the mean noted for rural students reflected a higher degree of awareness among rural students. In both settings, however, the standard deviations were small (< 0.5), suggesting that all students in each locality had similar levels of awareness about environmental issues. In response to the right of humans to modify the environment to suit their needs, both urban and rural groups of students had means less than 2.00, with a difference between the means of both populations less than 0.1, suggesting that both groups did not agree that humans had that right. Urban students, however, had a slightly higher mean ($x = 1.99$) than rural students ($x = 1.91$) on this concern, though the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 1. Students' Awareness, Beliefs, and Practices in Relation to Environmental Issues

Strand 1: Environmental issues linked to knowledge about environmental matters and about the impact of behaviours and practices on the environment					
		School Context	**Mean (x)**	*SD*	*t*
1	I like watching television programs with an environmental message	Urban	4.60	0.4	1.12
		Rural	4.72	0.3	
2	I like reading books or magazines with environmental articles	Urban	4.50	0.2	1.16
		Rural	4.71	0.2	
3	Humans have the right to modify the environment to suit their needs	Urban	1.99	0.4	0.72
		Rural	1.91	0.5	
4	When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences	Urban	4.02	0.3	0.09
		Rural	4.04	0.4	
5	Science and technology can overcome many environmental problems	Urban	3.04	0.4	0.54
		Rural	3.00	0.4	
6	Humans are severely abusing the environment	Urban	4.06	0.3	0.09
		Rural	4.08	0.2	
7	Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist	Urban	4.24	0.4	2.82*
		Rural	4.90	0.3	
8	The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset	Urban	4.03	0.3	0.62
		Rural	4.05	0.3	
9	Maintaining economic growth is more important than protecting the natural environment	Urban	4.08	0.6	1.19
		Rural	3.89	0.7	
10	If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe	Urban	4.01	0.4	0.62
		Rural	4.04	0.4	
Strand 2: Students' reflection on their own beliefs and practices in relation to the environment.					
11	I am well informed about environmental issues in Trinidad	Urban	4.05	0.3	0.09
		Rural	4.06	0.2	
12	I pay little attention when environmental issues are being reported in the news media, including radios, TV, newspapers and social media	Urban	1.89	0.6	0.48
		Rural	1.91	0.3	

13	Environmental education is as important as any other curriculum in school	Urban	4.02	0.3	2.4*
		Rural	4.33	0.3	
14	There is a lot I, as an individual, can do to protect the environment in my community	Urban	4.65	0.2	0.72
		Rural	4.72	0.2	
15	I perceive myself as very concerned about environmental issues in my community	Urban	4.53	0.3	0.45
		Rural	4.55	0.2	

Note: *Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Both groups of students agreed ($x > 4.00$) that when humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences. While they seemed undecided about the extent to which science and technology can overcome many environmental problems ($x = 3.04$ for urban students and $x = 3.00$ for rural students), they were in high agreement that in an overall sense humans were severely abusing the environment ($x = 4.06$ urban and $x = 4.08$ rural). When asked about how they felt about the right of plants and animals to exist as humans do, both groups agreed that plants and animals do in fact have an equal right, but rural students scored a statistically significant higher mean than their urban counterparts. This was the only statement in Strand 1 in which there was a significant disparity in the means between both groups of students ($x = 4.24$ urban; $x = 4.90$ rural; $t = 2.28$).

The delicate balance of nature and the ease with which this balance can be upset was a concern that both urban and rural students shared similar levels of agreement on, with the mean score in both localities differing by only 0.02. However, when asked about whether maintaining economic growth was more important than protecting the natural environment, urban students agreed with this statement to a high degree ($x = 4.08$) while the rural students seemed somewhat undecided on this issue ($x = 3.89$). The standard deviation in both cases was relatively high but of almost equal value, indicating that spread across the mean view was somewhat variable but that the degree of variability among students' views was similar in both localities. When asked about what they felt would happen if things continue on their present course, both groups of students were in high agreement that a major ecological catastrophe would result ($x = 4.01$ urban; $x = 4.04$ rural).

Students' beliefs and practices in relation to the environment

Data presented in Strand 2 of Table 1 show that when asked to reflect on their own beliefs and to articulate how they perceive themselves and their

practices in relation to the environment, both urban and rural students felt that their dispositions were environmentally friendly. When asked specifically about how informed they were about environmental issues in Trinidad and Tobago, both groups of students agreed highly, and almost equally so, that they were well informed ($x = 4.05$ urban; $x = 4.06$ rural). Responses indicated further that the majority of students from both localities were highly attentive to environmental issues discussed in, and disseminated via, print, electronic media, and social media (a small SD of 0.3 was found for both groups). Despite this high level of attention to information students claimed to have, there was a notably significant difference between the means obtained when the students were asked to judge the importance of environmental education against other subjects in the school curriculum. While both groups of students agreed that environmental education is just as important as any other curriculum subject in the school curriculum, rural students scored a significantly higher mean than urban students ($x = 4.02$ urban; $x = 4.33$ rural); $t = 2.4$ for $p < 0.05$. This result indicates that more rural students agreed to a larger extent that environmental education was just as important as other school subjects.

When asked to engage in personal reflection and to comment about how much they can individually do to protect the environment in their communities, rural students again scored a higher (though not statistically significant) mean ($x = 4.72$) than urban students ($x = 4.65$), suggesting that more rural than urban students saw environmental protection as an effort in which they felt there were actions that they could personally take to protect the environment in which they live. Furthermore, when asked about the extent of concern about environmental issues they perceive themselves to possess, both urban and rural students perceived themselves as having a high level of concern about environmental issues in their communities ($x > 4.5$ and $SD < 0.4$ for students from both localities).

Strand 3 – Action Taken on Behalf of Environmental Issues

Data gathered and analysed along this strand sought to elicit from students what action/s they had taken on behalf of environmental issues. Students were asked to respond simply *yes* or *no* to each of the actions. Table 2 shows the percentage of students in each locality who indicated whether or not they had taken any of the actions identified.

Table 2. Students' Actions on Behalf of Environmental Issues

Strand 3: Action on behalf of environmental issues		***Yes***		***No***	
		% Urban students	*% Rural students*	*% Urban students*	*% Rural students*
1	Wrote a letter to the newspaper	66	58	34	42
2	Wrote a letter to an organization or a public official	69	40	31	60
3	Telephoned a public official about an environmental issue	46	22	54	88
4	Took part in a protest on an environmental issue	63	78	37	22
5	Complained to a company/person causing damage to the environment	52	50	48	50
6	Joined an environmental action group	54	52	46	48
7	Signed a petition for an environmental issue	65	45	35	55
8	Contributed money to an environmental cause	62	72	38	28

With the exception of oral communication with public officials, the results show that for all other actions identified, the number of students who had engaged in action on behalf of the environment was greater than the number who did not. The results suggest further that more urban than rural students had engaged in formal means of communication such as letter writing, making telephone calls, and signing petitions to make their views on environmental issues known. More rural students used less formal methods such as engaging in protest action. Just over half of the students in both urban and rural localities indicated that they were part of an environmental action group, and a similar number, again in both localities, said that they had complained to a company or to a person responsible for causing damage to the environment. There was an 8% difference between urban and rural students who said that they had written letters to the newspapers to complain about or to highlight an environmental issue. What was interesting was that the percentage difference for both localities in respect of writing a letter to an organization/public official and telephoning a public official was much

higher—greater than 20%—with urban students on the higher end of the percentage gap. In other words, urban students were more willing and likely to register a complaint or highlight an issue at official levels than their rural counterparts. In the case of signing a petition, there was a 20% gap between the numbers of urban and rural students who had engaged in this action, with the results again showing that more urban than rural students had done so.

When asked about monetary contribution to an environmental cause, 62% of urban students indicated that they had done this, but an even higher percentage of rural students—72%—had engaged in this action. A similar observation was made with respect to taking part in protest action, with a high percentage of rural students—78%—indicating that they had engaged in active protest action on behalf of the environment (only 62% of urban students had engaged in similar active protest). The observed trend in both instances—making monetary contributions and engaging in protest action—seems to suggest that rural students are prepared to champion environmental causes on both the passive (monetary contribution) and the active (protesting) fronts to a far greater extent than their urban counterparts. The data did not suggest that urban students are unwilling to agitate on behalf of the environment, but they seem to suggest that on these two actions, more rural than urban students had acted.

Discussion

This work attempts to illustrate, on a small scale, the levels of awareness of and responsiveness to environmental issues among secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago from two different localities—urban and rural. The findings reflected elements of Armitage & Conner's theory of planned behavior (1999), to the extent that the views expressed by the students indicated that demonstrated behaviours and actions taken on behalf of the environment were deliberate, having been triggered by an event or an occurrence in their environment. In fact, most students are not only aware of environmentally unfriendly occurrences in their communities but have also themselves adopted a number of environmental views that they suggest have guided their actions, behaviours, and practices in their interactions with the environment. Plamberg and Kuru (2000) found a similar relationship between students' views on the environment and their everyday behaviours for a similar range of awareness indicators. However, the relationship between these two—views and behaviours—revealed in this work, is slightly more pronounced. In other words, students in Trinidad and Tobago displayed

slightly higher levels of environmental awareness and consequential behaviour than students in Colorado and Utah.

Noteworthy at this point is the revelation that from among the group of students who participated in this work (both localities), opinionnaire responses indicated that only a small number of students had not been involved in any initiative on environmental matters. In fact, only about 7% of urban students and 4% of rural students responded to indicate that they had seemingly indifferent positions on environmental issues.

It was obvious that students' willingness to act on behalf of the environment, in both localities, was linked to their levels of knowledge and awareness as described by the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). So much so, that the data showed that in relation to students' awareness, beliefs, and practices, both groups of students had comparable views in all but one instance. When asked to articulate views on the right of plants and animals to exist there was a significant difference between the overall views expressed by students from both localities. Urban students were not as convinced as rural students that plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist. Similar findings were noted in Maharaj-Sharma (2010), which was also conducted in the Trinidad and Tobago context, where students did not demonstrate high levels of emotion towards the right of plants and animals to co-exist with humans.

This work also revealed that when students were prompted to reflect their own beliefs and practices in relation to the environment, both urban and rural students agreed to a similar extent that they had a personal stake in keeping up to date with environmental issues in their communities, and in taking active responsibility for preserving the environment. Their beliefs significantly differed, however, when asked about the importance of environmental education in schools. Rural students believed that it was equally important as any other curriculum subject in the school system but urban students did not share this belief to a comparable extent. This is an interesting finding and one that warrants further investigation, particularly in the geographically small Trinidad and Tobago context, where students from across the country—urban and rural—are all exposed to the same environmental issues when they arise. The qualitative question to be answered in subsequent work is why rural students see environmental education as equally important as other subjects but urban students do not.

As was found by Shiva Kumar and Patil (2007), this work also showed that students were generally passionate about the environment and were prepared to take action against environmentally unfriendly activities and practices. This work showed that urban students are more likely to engage in passive actions on behalf of the environment by making official complaints, either written or oral, and by signing petitions, but that they

are not so likely to engage in active actions such as active protesting. Rural students, however, were generally equally likely to engage in both passive and active actions in favour of the environment, and were slightly more inclined than their urban colleagues to contribute money on behalf of an environmental cause. Overall, therefore, it would seem that rural students are defensive of the environment on more fronts than urban students, but this perception will need to be further investigated with larger groups of students from both localities. Even more than this perception, there is speculation that rural communities in the Trinidad and Tobago context are more emotionally connected to the environment than urban communities, perhaps because many rural communities depend on the environment for their livelihoods through farming and/or fishing. The higher means noted for rural students in respect of statements about defending and preserving the environment may be linked to this supposition. This, too, is an aspect of environmental awareness worthy of further investigation, particularly in the Trinidad and Tobago context.

Hsu (2010) pointed out that findings of small-scale studies on environmental attitudes, views, and perceptions can have a high degree of bias, as respondents are sampled at a snapshot period in time and therefore are likely to be influenced by what is happening in their immediate and extended environment at the time they are responding. If pressing environmental issues are in the forefront, responses might be skewed to higher levels of passion, concern, and care for the environment. While this concern was borne in mind during the implementation of this work, to the extent that the opinionnares were administered during a time when no known major environmental issue was in the forefront, it was difficult to determine if and what environmental constraints each student may have been faced with in their respective communities. In that sense, therefore, the findings revealed herein may not necessarily be an exact representation of levels of awareness and responsiveness among students, but it does provided a critical starting point from which further work in this area can emerge.

Note

Secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago are primarily of two types: government schools, which are fully funded by the government; or government-assisted schools (also called denominational schools), which are funded partly by the government and partly by denominational boards. In this work, the schools in each locality were (purposively) selected to reflect these two school types so that two government schools and two denominational schools were selected for each locality.

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Appendix

Section A – Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the environment and environmental issues by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

Section B – Please circle Yes or No to indicate which actions you have taken on behalf of environmental issues in your community.

Section A

		SA	D	U	A	SA
1	I like watching television programs with an environmental message					
2	I like reading books or magazines with environmental articles					
3	Humans have the right to modify the environment to suit their needs					
4	When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences					
5	Science and technology can overcome many environmental problems					
6	Humans are severely abusing the environment					
7	Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist					
8	The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset					
9	Maintaining economic growth is more important than protecting the natural environment					
10	If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe					
11	I am well informed about environmental issues in Trinidad					
12	I pay little attention when environmental issues are being reported in the news media, including radios, TV, newspapers and social media					
13	Environmental education is as important as any other curriculum in school					
14	There is a lot I, as an individual, can do to protect the environment in my community					
15	I perceive myself as very concerned about environmental issues in my community					

Section B			
16	Wrote a letter to the newspaper	Yes	No
17	Wrote a letter to an organization or a public official	Yes	No
18	Telephoned a public official about an environmental issue	Yes	No
19	Took part in a protest on an environmental issue	Yes	No
20	Complained to a company/person causing damage to the environment	Yes	No
21	Joined an environmental action group	Yes	No
22	Signed a petition for an environmental issue	Yes	No
23	Contributed money to an environmental cause	Yes	No

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MOBILE LEARNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOM: Readiness Experiences and Challenges

Sandra Figaro-Henry and *Freddy James*

The University of the West Indies (UWI) has signalled its intention to use ICTs to fuel growth in its competitiveness and improvement in the quality and effectiveness of its delivery of higher education services to a wider audience. The university's *Strategic Plan 2012–2017* spells out the path to this development and the priorities to achieve its vision. In an effort to be proactive in fulfilling the university's strategic objectives, the UWI School of Education, St. Augustine (UWISOESA) initiated the use of mobile learning technologies via a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative with some of its students in the Bachelor of Education programme. The mobile technologies literature reports many issues that can impede their effective use during teaching and learning. These issues include the degree of readiness for implementation, safety, security, connectivity, and communication. This paper reports on a study done to determine how students involved in the BYOD initiative experienced the initiative at the UWISOESA. It reports on students' perceptions of the degree of readiness of UWISOESA for BYOD; their experiences and challenges; and how to improve the initiative. The study has implications for regional policy formulation.

Introduction

21st century technological developments currently drive educational reform, improvement, and change at all levels of the system from early childhood to higher education. Educators and instructional designers, recognizing the potential of mobile technologies as a viable learning tool, have incorporated their use in blended, distance, and face-to-face programmes (Norris & Soloway, 2011). Regionally, in its strategic plan 2012–2017, one of the goals that The University of the West Indies (UWI, 2012) has identified in its strategic objectives is to "provide multiple, flexible paths for all constituencies to pursue tertiary education over their lifetime" (p. 33). The third strategic objective of this goal is to "enable technology solutions for teaching, learning and research" (p. 33). The use of mobile technologies for teaching, learning, and research is one technological solution that can be used to achieve this objective. Figaro-Henry, Mitchell, and Grant-Fraser (2011) conducted a study on three

higher education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, namely, UWI School of Education, UWI Open Campus, and The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) San Fernando Campus. That study sought to determine the degree of mobile device ownership, willingness to purchase mobile devices, usage patterns, and access to services, as well as perceptions of mobile learning utility at these institutions. Despite some reservations, 92% of respondents expressed readiness and willingness to embrace mobile learning. Yet the literature identifies many issues that can impede the effective use of mobile technologies during teaching and learning (Estable, 2013; Morrison, 2013). These issues revolve around the degree of readiness for implementation, safety, security, connectivity, and communication. Nevertheless, these challenges are not insuperable.

Context

UWI is considered the premier higher education institution in the Commonwealth Caribbean. It consists of three physical campuses at: Mona in Jamaica, St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago, and Cave Hill in Barbados; and one virtual campus: the Open Campus. In the UWI higher education regional context, there is little research that documents students' experiences of the impact of using mobile devices during their instruction. Still, there is evidence that the campuses have been embracing mobile technologies to some degree to deliver their services. The Mona Campus has engaged mobile technology within its departments to communicate with students. It has been reported that the library uses text messaging to inform students of the availability of reserved books, and patrons are also able to access some databases using their smartphones. Other departments use text messaging to inform students of financial matters. Thus, the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) at the UWI School of Education, St. Augustine (UWISOESA) initiative being reported on in this study documents a step further across the campuses in embracing mobile technologies in teaching and learning. It is not in this singular regard that this study is important. It is also significant because it signals an innovativeness on the part of UWISOESA that can fulfill the university's strategic objective to "enable technology solutions for teaching, learning and research" (UWI, 2012, p. 33). Further, the study is significant because it demonstrates proactiveness on the part of the UWISOESA to garner feedback from students, and to weave this into formulating and adopting policy and making changes to the initiative (Raths, 2012). As such, the results of this study have implications for university-wide BYOD policy creation and adoption.

The BYOD Initiative

In 2012, UWISOESA introduced the BYOD mobile learning innovation as an instructional strategy in two courses in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programmes. The course titled "Production and Use of Educational Material — EDTK3202" was offered in two modes of delivery: face-to-face and blended. Students enrolled in both groups were allowed to bring their own devices to facilitate their learning during the delivery of these programmes.

In Semester 1 of September 2012, the EDTK3202 course was offered to two groups of students doing their B.Ed. degree in both face-to-face and blended modes, respectively. The same content, objectives, outcomes, and deliverables (shared by the lecturers in the learning management system Moodle, customized as myeLearning) were used for both groups, but taught by two different lecturers. The blended group met for classes on Mondays from 5-8 pm, and the face-to-face group met on campus in the PC laboratory from 5-8 pm. The blended group met face-to-face for four out of the 12 meeting times, in a room fitted with one wireless access point capable of continuous wireless Internet streaming for the group; the other eight meetings were online, at a distance, using the Blackboard Collaborate synchronous learning tool.

Literature Review

Defining Mobile Learning

Mobile devices are the instruments that facilitate mobile learning. Jacob and Issac (2008, p. 1) described mobile devices as "small, portable and wireless computing and communication devices" that can be used from multiple locations. Al Mosawi and Wali (2015) differentiated mobile smart phones and tablets with improved processing, location identification, connectivity, memory, communication and interaction capabilities as newer mobile devices, and categorized less capable devices as first generation devices. Examples of mobile devices include cellular phones, portable media players, electronic reading devices, ipods, palmtops, tablets, laptops, phablets, smartphones, smart watches, and other wearable technologies. Web 2.0 technologies facilitate social networking using social networking sites (such as Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, blogs, YouTube, Twitter, wikis), and program applications (mobile apps) have made mobile devices not only dynamic but pervasive (Park, 2011). It is perhaps the dynamic and pervasive nature of mobile devices that make them so appealing to use within the learning environment. Hence, mobile learning is often described as ubiquitous,

anytime, anywhere access to educational and university resources and instruction driven by mobile technology (Akour, 2009; Martin, Pastore, & Snider, 2012).

The concept of mobile learning has evolved over time. Early definitions of mobile learning tended to define it in terms of a tool used to facilitate and support learner instruction because of its portability and affordability (Traxler, 2007; Yamaguchi, 2005). More recent definitions of mobile learning are more process oriented in their definitional approaches, associating its meaning with learning activities and the role that handheld wireless devices play in facilitating such learning. The *2008 Mobile Learning* report defines it as:

> any activity that allows individuals to be more productive when consuming, interacting with, or creating information mediated through a compact digital portable device that the individual carries on a regular basis, has reliable connectivity and fits in a pocket or purse. (Wexler, Brown, Metcalf, Rogers, & Wagner, 2008, p. 7)

Still, a key definitional quality of mobile learning is its ability to transcend geographical boundaries. Chuang (2009) defines it as "learning that happens across locations, or that takes advantage of learning opportunities offered by portable technologies" (p. 51).

Therefore, in the higher education context, mobile learning is seen to possess three main components: mobility of the technology and the mobility of the learner, as well as "the mobility and dynamism of the learning processes and the flow of information" (El-Hussein & Cronje, 2010, p. 12).

Developing an Understanding of BYOD in the Context of Mobile Teaching and Learning

The term BYOD refers to "the practice of students bringing their own laptops, tablets, smartphones, or other mobile devices with them to class" (Rackley & Viruru, 2014, p. 1). The practice "encourages students to use devices they already own. This calls for a new mobile learning paradigm: When BYOD is the norm, learning should be device agnostic and fluid across device types" (Fang, 2014, para.16). In other words, the devices should facilitate continuous learning on and off campus, at a distance, anywhere, and anytime. As the number of personal mobile devices increases in higher educational institutions, there is real opportunity for this practice to continue as "educational institutes are observing [a] tendency of students and teachers to bring their laptops, smart phones and tablets as a resource for enhancing their learning experience" (Afreen,

2014, p. 234). Enhanced experiences could signal more and varied use of digital media, and these:

> media applications will place ever-increasing demands on a university's network infrastructure. Universities not only [now] need to support the requirements of today; they need to anticipate and plan for future requirements so they can scale the network in a prudent and cost-effective way. (Aspell, 2012, p. 2)

The term BYOD first surfaced in 2009, when corporate employees began bringing personal devices to connect to company networks. (Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, & Haywood, 2011). This trend continued over the years and found its way into the classrooms of many schools and higher educational institutions. Grounded in social learning theory and connectivism, BYOD capitalizes on the use of the Internet and wireless technologies in the teaching and learning process. Even though institutions are inherently different, the BYOD phenomenon continues, and has assisted higher educational institutions, facing diverse financial challenges and shrinking funding for technology equipment, to leverage students' mobile devices as a solution for effecting student learning in and away from the classroom. Getting teachers and students ready for teaching and learning in the 21st century is a complex and costly enterprise. Hence, in an effort to minimize their financial strain, some higher education institutions are attempting to harness this innovation to satisfy student needs, by embracing policies proposing students use their own mobile devices, which they already know how to use and are responsible for maintaining (Jarvis, Jimison, Norris, & Waskey, 2013).

Readiness Perceptions of BYOD

Though connectivity to the Web has facilitated higher education institutions' mobile and BYOD initiatives, educators interface with technologies only when they feel comfortable. Developing staff and students with the requisite skills to navigate and eventually thrive in the mobile technological environment may still require some training, and will not occur instantly or in one day, but with planning and perseverance, development will happen. In the long run, Hockly (2012) sees real value for educational organizations, as he points out that "clearly a big plus with BYOD is that students are already responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of their own devices, which they know how to use" (p. 45). However, readiness for BYOD involves more than just knowing how to use a device and how the device can aid in education.

Raths (2012), in documenting educational institutions' BYOD readiness and experiences in several educational districts throughout the

US, had some readiness suggestions for educators. Essentially, a proactive approach was welcomed, along with suggestions for a gradual improvement to the organization's wireless system. Raths further suggested that feedback should be gathered and analysed from users at various locations, in order to ensure that the wireless system is flexible and agile. If the educational institutions are unable to monitor and view what is happening on their WAN, they should contract it out so that the system can be fine-tuned to improve performance for the users.

At Letterkenny Institute of Technology in Ireland, Lennon (2012) described similar yet uniquely different readiness activities for younger learners and part-time, older, non-traditional learners living far from the institute. Lennon shared her institution's legal issues and the educational challenges encountered while housing resources in the cloud and transitioning to BYOD. Her readiness advice spoke to the need for the wireless computing environment to contain practical human resource development and training on physical and cloud application, in order to enable the differentiated younger learners and the older students who may be unfamiliar with the cloud environment to become more proficient in its use. She stressed the importance of the institutions considering BYOD to conform to "data security and data privacy policies of the educational institution and all applicable laws and regulations on data privacy; software licenses and digital media copy protection" (Lennon, 2012, p. 2). She also underscored the need for a helpdesk to continue supporting the diverse 21st century learners at a distance.

21st Century Learners, BYOD Environments, and Trends

Learners in the 21st century possess an inherent need to create, communicate, collaborate, and curate in the physical and virtual environments they traverse. Stevens (2011) suggests that this is not about to change in the near future. Learners, teachers, and the learning have changed, and it is reasonable to expect that the environments where the learning happens must also change. Neither revolution nor innovation happens just by the placement of technological tools in the environments. Having the knowledge to effectively use the technologies is advocated. Thus, institution-wide readiness, including student readiness, is an integral initial step (Emery, 2012).

Large numbers of learners own more than one mobile device, and the higher education landscape is awash with consumer-owned mobile devices. Pagram and Cooper (2013) urged higher education institutions to adopt a BYOD strategy that is steeped in sound pedagogical practice. Their 2013 research report, which was the third in a series of surveys (the

first was conducted in 2007, the second in 2010, and the third in 2012), reported a dramatic increase in the use of personal mobile devices from 2010. It included recommendations for adapting both pedagogy and support for a BYOD model. Generally, students were found to be comfortable with technology devices even though they do not own them, and were found using these devices to learn and achieve tasks. (Pagram & Cooper, 2013). The paper went on to identify some critical BYOD student readiness considerations and issues, such as telling students about some of the minimum hardware specifications and the software they need access to upon enrolment, and about the e-books and other digital resources that are available to them. Infrastructural support should exist, and professional development, if needed, should be identified and provided to the learners.

There appears to be consensus among BYOD researchers regarding advocacy for institution-wide strategies. Emery (2012) provided a review of the BYOD literature published between 2007 and 2012, in which he too stressed the need for developing an institution-wide strategy to address a BYOD decision. In his work, he identified "(a) policy creation, (b) data security, (c) user education, and (d) mobile learning" (p. 9) as key elements of the strategy. Staff, it was recorded, preferred using their own devices, and employers are opening up their networks to learners' mobile devices. This trend is called the "consumerization of IT" (Gens, Levitas, & Segal, 2011, p. 1). This phenomenon refers to the process of how users (consumers) and user technologies are being incorporated, along with digital tools and social networking tools, into the BYOD environment, thus driving the IT enterprise processes of the educational institutions. This phenomenon was at work in the BYOD initiative at the School of Education, too, as the teachers on the B.Ed. programme, by bringing their devices, effected a demand for mobility, causing the technical team to increase and improve the wireless reach, number, and speeds of the access points. A positive outcome results, in that, ultimately, "the flow is two-way: work is flowing into personal time as well, which makes workers more productive" (Gens, Levitas, & Segal, 2011, p. 1).

Scanning the BYOD Landscape

The higher education landscape is changing. Tertiary institutions, as part of their BYOD readiness efforts, have begun researching to ascertain readiness for BYOD—to glean responses from the student population and from the institution as a whole. A Malaysian study involving 2,837 undergraduate adult learners between the ages of 31 and 35 years, from 31 centres throughout that country, found that almost all (98.91%) of the

students possessed mobile phones and, of that number, 82% pictured themselves using them to learn. (Abas, Peng, & Mansor, 2009).

Two years earlier, Zawacki-Richter, Brown, and Delport (2006) reported on knowledge of and experiences of mobile learning in an international survey of distance educators' organizations, which included a lone Caribbean respondent from a higher educational institution in Barbados. The findings were reported as a collective whole, and it was not possible to identify the individual institutions' mobile experiences. However, what is known is that at the time of the survey, exactly half of the 88 participating institutions did not have plans to pursue mobile learning. Some 37% of institutions had contemplated "developing course materials but [none had] as yet done so" (p. 9). Only 7% of the educators, though, had developed content for delivery on mobile devices. The Barbados respondent, though a solitary voice, signalled a region just waking up to a new mobile paradigm.

Four years later in Trinidad and Tobago, Figaro-Henry, Mitchell, and Grant-Fraser, in their 2011 study, revealed a more lucid picture of the Caribbean region's perception of its state of mobile learning readiness. Data from two universities were collected, representing three campuses, each with different instructional modes of programme delivery—one offering courses in a fully face-to face-mode, one providing a blended programme, and one in a fully online instructional mode. The Open Campus of UWI offers programmes in fully online modes only, and services smaller, separated Caribbean territories. Readiness data from 178 Caribbean participants—78% students and 22% facilitators—disclosed information on the degree of readiness for mobile learning with respect to ownership of and willingness to purchase mobile devices, mobile services and usage patterns, and the perceived usefulness of mobile learning. Although some uncertainty was reflected, 92% of the Caribbean participants divulged willingness and readiness for mobile learning (Figaro-Henry, Mitchell, & Grant-Fraser, 2011).

At UWI, Mona, a year later, the Bursary staff used innovative digital text messaging technologies to communicate with students regarding their financial status. Library staff use text messaging to contact work-study students they employ, apprise registered students of the availability of reserved items, and afford library users access to databases from their mobile devices (Nelson, 2013).

Improving BYOD Readiness Through Policy Formulation, Development, and Adoption

Institutional readiness for BYOD could be beneficial to all in the organization—students, faculty, and administration—and as students become more empowered with mobile learning tools in their own hands, what remains "the real challenge, therefore, is the embrace of BYOD readiness [by] high level management" (French, Guo, & Shim, 2014, p. 196). It is at this administrative level that an expertly crafted BYOD policy can assist the BYOD initiative; a view held by diFilipo (2013), who advocates policy as a means to assist in protecting mobile systems, networks, and data. He goes further to suggest that the use of policies can garner structure and support for personal mobile devices, and provide limited liability for tertiary institutions. An institution's *Acceptable Use Policy* may be inadequate for some issues that can accompany a BYOD initiative, and a policy audit may reveal a need for additional policies or procedures. Formulating policy is, however, just one part of the BYOD challenge. The greater challenge resides in ensuring that policy formulation, as a part of the institution-wide strategy, provides protection for the institution and its resources (diFilipo, 2013). All groups involved in the BYOD strategy may require policy formulated to their unique function or department. The policy or policies should also facilitate present and future technologies in all educational spaces, real and virtual. Drafting a policy that is detailed yet broad, and which provides sufficient flexibility to encompass emerging technologies, requires both thought and time.

Policies should, of necessity, emanate from national and international laws (Afreen, 2014). Unfortunately, some "educational institutes have [already] allowed some form of BYOD onto their campus mostly via network access control (NAC) without formulating and implementing BYOD policy" (Afreen, 2014, p. 235). An obvious implication of this is that "this is very risky as institutes are exposing their networks to various threats like unauthorized access, attacks of malware and viruses from student devices connected to [an] institute['s] network" (Afreen, 2014, p. 235). Student devices, too, can also experience unauthorized access and data loss.

Security and Other Challenges: Important BYOD Considerations

Both human and physical resources need to be secure. Unauthorized access to data on networks and individual devices, viruses and malware, and impersonating users are possible breaches to BYOD security (Armando, Costa, & Merlo, 2013; Bennett & Tucker, 2012; Ullman, 2011). The work of these researchers is testimony to the importance of the

organizational infrastructure, systems, and security in BYOD adoption. They propose that tertiary institutions adhere to a security framework for mobile devices which ensures that only applications complying with the organization's security policy can be installed on devices. This, they believe, is crucial to the security plan. All stakeholders should be part of formulating and administering the security plan. Establishing a support team for existing policies; developing security standards for institutional hardware, software, and infrastructure; and a financial plan for funding recurring security expenditure are also important in BYOD initiatives. "Without those in place, don't bother going forward," declares Ullman (2011, p. 3).

Without a doubt, "Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is a big challenge for network administrators. Another requirement is to reduce prime and maintenance costs" (Aßmann, Kiontke, & Roller, 2015, p. 141). "BYOD has small investment cost but longtime operational cost" (Afreen, 2014, p. 234). These may initially be low, but with time, and if left unmanaged, could climb as there are fixed and recurring costs needed to keep the human, physical, and systems resources safe in the BYOD environment.

The BYOD Initiative: Impediments and Importance

There are three *Is* impeding impactful BYOD: impediments to the individuals using the initiative; impediments to the ICT systems connecting the individuals to the learning; and impediments to the infrastructure, the physical structures, equipment, and resources needed to run the intangible software or freeware. Administrators and faculty do not always share the same vision about mobile learning innovations. Faculty teaching the same subject areas or curriculum, too, can also experience this diametric opposition. Faculty concerns regarding perceived increased student potential for cheating hold real implications for negatively impacting readiness initiatives (Thomas & O'Bannon, 2013). This is a fundamental incongruence, and can immobilize any BYOD thrust. In the recent past, BYOD was seen by some educators as a disruptive innovation. Some faculty still hold to this view. Students also distrust the wireless connectivity, regarding it as open, thus unsecured, and fear for the safety of their stored or shared data. Depending on the type and length of experiences with BYOD, individuals may not possess the self-discipline to self-regulate in the BYOD spaces (Fang, 2014). The inability of users to access the Internet, cloud storage, learning management systems (LMSs), and digital resources housed in networks locally or remotely; or the presence of frequent electrical or computer systems disruptions that

impede online communication among learners are severe ICT systems obstacles impacting BYOD (Lennon, 2012).

In navigating the BYOD environment, faculty, other staff, and students are required to be proficient in the use of all the peripheral instructional devices such as wireless printers, projectors, and other devices operated remotely, which will facilitate and complement the new fluid, mobile spaces. Not being au courant with peripherals can hamper or even stymie instruction and learning. It has also been noted that, overall, student devices tend to be more modern than those owned by the institution (Thomas & O'Bannon, 2013). Educators are now required (not to be device experts) to know about emerging technologies students are using in these fluid environments. The technical and administrative staff may be challenged in managing the fluid BYOD spaces (Afreen, 2014). This analogy, shared by Fang (2014), aptly describes the disposition that should be adopted by users of new BYOD spaces:

> Rather than viewing a learning activity as a solo performance on a particular instrument, it might be best to view it as more like an orchestra, with students using their own devices to the best of their ability, while the same content flows like music through them to create the grand harmony of learning. (para. 27)

The BYOD environment is not just riddled with challenges; benefits also abound in the form of flexible learning opportunities, active engagement in groups, motivated learners, engaging activities, communication, preparation for the future (college and workforce), increased teaching time, saving space (e-books), improved student engagement (Sucre, 2012), and increased productivity. Mobile devices are facilitating the creation of learning outcomes that promote creativity, innovation, and engagement (Sucre, 2012). Therefore, after careful and critical consideration of the negative BYOD consequences, it cannot be denied that the practice of BYOD "opens up opportunities to connect learning inside and beyond the classroom" (Sharples et al., 2014, p. 17).

Research Design

This study used a qualitative interpretive approach to investigate students' perceptions of their BYOD experiences as part of a technology integration course at the UWISOESA.

The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. *What are students' perceptions of the state of readiness of UWISOESA for BYOD mobile learning?*
2. *How did students feel about their BYOD experiences at the UWISOESA?*
3. *What challenges did students involved in the BYOD initiative encounter in using their mobile devices during instruction at the UWISOESA?*
4. *What do students believe the UWISOESA can do to improve students' BYOD experiences?*

All participants teach at various levels in the education system, including early childhood, primary, and secondary. Participants were drawn from students enrolled in either the face-to-face or blended version of the course titled "Use of Media and Production of Educational Materials (EDTK 3202)," a final-year course, which is offered to students pursuing a B.Ed. degree. The research sample consisted of a total of 56 participants (3 males and 53 females). Of these participants, 39 (38 females and 1 male) were enrolled as face-to-face students; and 17 (15 females and 2 males) were enrolled as blended students (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

F2f Students		**Blended Students**	
Gender	**No.**	**Gender**	**No.**
Male	1	Male	2
Female	38	Female	15
Total	39	Total	17

Data were collected via an online survey. Students in both delivery modes were emailed the link to the online survey and their responses were returned online to the B.Ed. facilitators who taught the course. The survey consisted of 36 questions focused on four key elements of BYOD mobile learning:

- UWISOESA's BYOD readiness
- BYOD experiences of students at the UWISOESA
- BYOD challenges at the UWISOESA
- BYOD possibilities the UWISOESA

The survey comprised different types of questions, including Likert scale, open-ended, dichotomous, and multiple-choice questions. Questions 1 to 8 collected demographic data. Questions 9 and 10 were open-ended and elicited responses on students' BYOD experiences and identified the types of student devices used while at the School of Education. Likert scale questions, from 11 to 32, rated from *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree,* to *strongly agree*, ascertained the degree of readiness of the students for BYOD. The final four questions, 33 to 36, gathered data from students on what reasons they proffered for the SOE's state of BYOD readiness, and future BYOD practice they would like to see in operation at the School.

Items 11 to 32 on the survey, which collected data on student perceptions of UWISOESA's BYOD readiness used Parasuraman's (2000) Technology Readiness Index (TRI) scale, as discussed in Elliott, Hall, and Meng (2008) as a framework to formulate the questions. Parasuraman's (2000) Technology Readiness Index (TRI) scale recognizes that any type of technology readiness should include elements that encourage or discourage individuals from using the new technology. In the Likert scale used by Parasuraman (2000), these elements were captured by dimensions that dealt with optimism, innovativeness, discomfort, and insecurity. For the current study being reported on in this paper, these dimensions were framed in two broad categories—+ positive and – negative—to garner participants' perceptions of UWISOESA's mobile learning readiness. This adapted version of Parasuraman (2000) allowed the researchers to capture the range of participants' experiences within this particular context, without limiting their responses to, on the positive side, optimism and innovativeness, and on the negative side, discomfort and insecurity.

The Findings

The mobile devices being used by students involved in the BYOD innovation at the UWISOESA were smartphones and laptops (see Table 2).

Table 2. Mobile Devices Used by Participants

Type of Device	No of Participants
Laptops	38
Smartphones	14
ipads	0

Type of Device	No of Participants
ipods	0
eReaders	0
Other: Digital Camera Not applicable	 1 1

This section presents the findings based on the four research questions posed for the study.

UWISOESA's BYOD Readiness (RQ1)

Data collected from the student participants indicate that 68% believed that UWISOESA is 40-100% BYOD ready; 32% felt that the UWISOESA was only 39% ready. The adapted version of Parasuraman's (2000) TRI (examining positive and negative dimensions of mobile learning readiness) was used to determine the factors participants attributed to the UWISOESA's current BYOD state of readiness or lack thereof. The factors that positively contribute to the UWISOESA's BYOD degree of readiness include:

- the helpful staff at the UWISOESA (8%)
- the competence level of staff (8%)
- the technological innovativeness and responsiveness at the UWISOESA (15%)
- the mere fact that it is possible to engage in mobile learning via BYOD (13%)

Participants stated that: ''*SOE is always trying to make improvements on technology*" and there is "*regular up grading of technology*." In terms of the staff factors that contributed to the UWISOESA's BYOD readiness, participants commented about: "*the hard work done by the team of technicians*." Additionally, participants indicated that there were student factors which contributed to the UWISOESA's state of readiness, for example, in their own words: "*Keeping track on assignment, adapting a method of study and research, making myself available to learning about the new types of software or applications*." Students' competency in the use of technology also contributed to the UWISOESA's BYOD's readiness.

The negative factors that participants attributed to the UWISOESA's lack of readiness for BYOD included matters related to: connectivity, safety, unhelpful technical staff, competence, security, and communication. Participants commented on: "*intermittent lack of connectivity, poor internet access, the lack of help from the computer technician and the lack of security for ... devices*."

In determining participants' perceptions of the UWISOESA's BYOD degree of readiness, the researchers asked participants if they were satisfied with the degree of readiness. The findings show that 62% of the participants indicated that they were not satisfied. As such, overall, the researchers concluded that although there are some positive factors, for example, the UWISOESA's innovativeness and competence in the use of technology, at this current time the majority of students engaged in the BYOD innovation do not believe that the school is sufficiently ready, and this is largely because of safety, security, and connectivity issues.

Students' Perceptions of Their UWISOESA BYOD Experiences (RQ2)

The findings showed that students had both positive and negative experiences of engaging in BYOD at the UWISOESA. The factors that contributed to students' negative experiences were issues associated with poor connectivity (66%); no knowledge of the existence of a BYOD policy at the UWISOESA (66%); and the need for technical support (80%). All the negative factors that participants identified as part of their BYOD experience can be categorized as UWISOESA-related factors. In terms of positive experiences, participants indicated that they felt comfortable with BYOD (70%) and they were encouraged to bring their own devices (71%). They also stated that the BYOD initiative afforded increased productivity (88%) and convenience (90%) working with their own devices, because they could research concepts in real time as they were exploring a topic in class, and save their data onto their own device for quick and convenient retrieval.

Challenges Students Encountered in Engaging in the BYOD Initiative at the UWISOESA (RQ3)

Participants identified a range of factors that presented challenges in using their mobile devices during instruction at the UWISOESA as part of the BYOD initiative. These challenges can be categorized as student-centred factors and UWISOESA factors. Key among the UWISOESA challenges was the inconsistent Internet speed and connectivity, which all the participants alluded to. In fact, based on the participants' comments, this

challenge was one that significantly affected the students' experience of BYOD and thwarted the effectiveness of the UWISOESA's BYOD initiative. In this regard, participants stated:

> "*the wireless connection was poor as one often had to disconnect and reconnect the service more than five times in thirty minutes; there seems to be a problem with connectivity and sometimes it is difficult to connect with your own system as there seems to be some sort of a scramble system blocking outside transmission*."

The two student-centred factors were battery failure (1 participant) and incompetence (1 participant). The latter stated: "*inability to access website/incompetent of using device*."

How Can the UWISOESA Improve Students' BYOD Experiences? (RQ4)

The findings for this research question were linked to issues of connectivity, policy, accommodation in terms of a designated space, security, and safety. As anticipated, all of the participants felt that easier and faster Internet connectivity required improvement for the BYOD initiative to be effective. Nevertheless, it was participants' suggestion that the UWISOESA develop a BYOD policy to guide the initiative, and ensure that this policy is effectively communicated to all stakeholders, that was particularly noteworthy. One participant suggested that the UWISOESA should have a: "*prominent display of BYOD-related matters to facilitate user awareness*." Another stated: "*I was not aware of BYOD so probably this can be highlighted more in the classes*," and yet another said: "*not intimate with the policy would like to know more though*." The participants' comments highlight the importance of institutionalizing the BYOD initiative. One participant's comments encapsulate the need for improvements across all the areas:

> "*Prominent, user-friendly display of BYOD-related matters at strategic locations on the SOE compound, as well as on the student platform on myuwi.edu. Further, a greater level of security for individuals with devices on their persons or in their vehicles might contribute to user comfort*."

Participants were concerned about safety and security related to their physical equipment, as well as unauthorized access to their data and digital material. Additionally, participants felt that there should be a designated physical space allocated for students engaged in the BYOD initiative, with adequate connections to power their devices.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study in terms of the research purpose, questions, and literature reviewed for the study, and presents the implications of these findings in terms of the UWISOESA's BYOD initiative. As such, the discussion addresses issues related to UWISOESA's BYOD readiness, student experiences of BYOD, BYOD challenges at UWISOESA, and how to improve the BYOD initiative at the UWISOESA.

In discussing BYOD readiness level, the key elements to be examined include student and staff mobile readiness, that is, having both student and staff competent and knowledgeable in using technology for learning, which includes using mobile devices and interacting with systems, synchronously and asynchronously, that facilitate learning on the go (Markelj & Bernik, 2012). Further, readiness includes having reliable, high-speed Internet connectivity; convenient and easy access to mobile learning; working environments that are safe in terms of data security and safety of equipment; institutional commitment to mobile learning as evidenced in the quality of service and policy development and adoption (Akour, 2009; diFilipo, 2013; Emery, 2012; Raths, 2012). The findings of the current study showed that while the majority of participants believe that the UWISOESA is reasonably BYOD ready, this is from the perspective of the mobile readiness of students, but not necessarily ready in terms of connectivity, safety, security, and institutional commitment as evidenced in policy development and adoption. These latter conditions are critical for any institution to be BYOD ready and to ensure the effectiveness of any such initiative (Akour, 2009; diFilipo, 2013; Emery, 2012; Raths, 2012). Still, the fact that research was conducted to determine the experiences, readiness, challenges, and ways to improve the BYOD initiative is laudable and, according to Raths (2012), is certainly a step in the right direction towards effectiveness.

The students engaged in the BYOD initiative at the UWISOESA, by and large, viewed it as an experience that is beneficial. The findings indicated that a large percentage of the participants had positive experiences with the BYOD initiative, particularly as it afforded increased productivity and convenience in accomplishing learning tasks. This finding is in keeping with results found in other studies (e.g., Afreen 2014; Figaro-Henry, Mitchell, & Grant-Fraser, 2011; Sucre, 2012). In the same vein, the results of this study, as they relate to students' negative experiences with BYOD, also support what is generally found in the literature, that is, that negative experiences are attributed to poor connectivity, and lack of attention to safety, security, and technical support

(Akour, 2009; diFilipo, 2013; Markelj & Bernik, 2012). What seemed incongruent in terms of these findings and that of others reported in the literature related to policy development and adoption. Generally, the literature reported that an ineffective policy may precipitate a negative BYOD experience; however, for the UWISOESA it was not the ineffectiveness of policy that was causing a negative experience for students, but the lack of a BYOD policy.

There are some key issues that present challenges to instituting and effecting any BYOD initiative. These include: Internet connectivity, data security, user education, and policy creation and adoption (Akour, 2009; Gens, Levitas, & Segal, 2011; Markelj & Bernick, 2012). The current study showed that the UWISOESA is experiencing similar challenges to those documented in other research studies with regard to BYOD initiatives. Still, as documented in the literature, these challenges are not insurmountable. There are options that can be implemented to improve the BYOD experience. The UWISOESA might find it useful to heed Raths' (2012) advice to be proactive in developing a BYOD policy, and to collect and use feedback from users to improve the initiative. This study is evidence of the latter, which, in and of itself, signals that the UWISOESA is on the right course to improving its BYOD initiative. In the UWISOESA's case, in particular, the formulation of an institution-wide BYOD policy should to some extent alleviate or minimize some of the challenges, especially those that the findings have identified as institution related. Still further, as Afreen (2014) suggests, there are many factors to consider in establishing a BYOD policy; it is not necessarily a linear process. For the UWISOESA, consideration would have to be given to whether a BYOD policy must first be articulated at the regional UWI level. In which case, the UWISOESA will have to engage the discourse at that level before moving forward with its own policy formulation. Attention will also have to be paid to the university's ICT policy as it relates to access and security, or its mobile work policy.

Implications for BYOD at UWISOESA

The study showed that students see value and benefits in using mobile learning technologies during their higher education instruction at the UWISOESA. This implies that it is worthwhile for the UWISOESA to continue to pursue the BYOD initiative, not only because it is beneficial for the students, but also, as Hockly (2012) posits, because it is worthwhile for the institution financially, as the students already own their devices and are responsible for their maintenance. The students and staff are to a large extent mobile ready and competent. Nevertheless, the findings of this

study imply that further research to determine mobile learning competency levels of all categories of UWISOESA staff and students should be done before expanding the initiative. Additionally, as Lennon (2012) points out, there may be need for what she terms "practical" human resource training and development for both staff and students on physical and cloud applications, in order to empower the young differentiated learners and the adult learners who may be new to the cloud environment.

The UWISOESA will have to move towards establishing a BYOD policy and, as the findings of this study indicate, it will probably also have to assign a designated space for students engaged in mobile learning to operate. Additionally, the BYOD policy should articulate ways to build mobile learning capacity at SOE in terms of connectivity, data access, data security, safety for devices, and user education.

Conclusion

This study sought to determine the readiness, experiences, and challenges of the BYOD initiative instituted at the UWISOESA in two B.Ed. programmes. The majority of students have their own devices and find it convenient to use them during instruction. Among the reasons they put forward is the ease of access to information, and the ability to save and retrieve information and conduct research related to their course of instruction in real time. Issues of poor Internet connectivity, safety of equipment and data, lack of a BYOD policy that is formally communicated to students, and some unhelpful technical staff impede the otherwise satisfying BYOD experience at the UWISOESA. Still, the majority of students feel that UWISOESA has a satisfactory level of mobile learning readiness, and they are heartened by the UWISOESA's innovativeness in implementing a BYOD initiative.

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UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' EFFICACY WITHIN A CARIBBEAN CONTEXT

Loraine D. Cook

This study examined the validity and reliability of a modified version of the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* developed by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy in 2001. A principal component analysis using oblimin rotation was performed on data collected from 905 classroom teachers drawn mainly from primary and secondary schools in Jamaica. Results of the analysis identified two dimensions: personal teaching efficacy and classroom management. Cronbach's alphas of the dimensions ranged from 0.646 to 0.854. The results also showed that school type, gender, and teacher status in the school organization had small but significant influence on the levels of participants' teacher efficacy.

Introduction

Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach and to effect change in their students' academic performance and behaviour is critical to teachers' success or failure in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) predicts teachers' belief in their effectiveness in the class, their professional behaviour, and value for students' outcomes (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Teacher efficacy predicts teachers' influence on student achievement (Richardson, 2011); teachers' flexibility to change in the curriculum and adoption of innovation (Charalambous & Philippou, 2010); teachers' efforts in preparing lesson plans (Pan, Chou, Hsu, Li, & Hu, 2013); and teachers competency in classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Several measurement instruments have been developed to assess teacher efficacy (Brouwers & Tomic, 2003; Denzine, Cooney, & McKenzie, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The early instruments were guided by Rotter's social learning theory of locus of control (1966). This theory postulated that teachers who felt overwhelmed to influence change in students' learning and who considered student outcomes outside of their control were external in their locus of control orientation. Conversely, teachers who were confident that they could motivate and bring about change in difficult students were internal in their locus of control orientation.

Researchers at the Rand Corporation were the first to research teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Their study identified two dimensions to the teacher efficacy construct: general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. Statements on the instrument measuring environmental factors likely to overwhelm a teacher's power to influence students' learning were clustered under the label *general teaching efficacy*. Items indicating the teacher's belief in his or her ability to overcome factors that could make learning difficult for students were grouped under the label *personal teaching efficacy* (Brouwers & Tomic, 2003). Denzine, Cooney, and MacKenzie (2005) noted that general teaching efficacy assessed teachers' outcome expectations, while personal teaching efficacy is based on teachers' judgements of their ability to influence student learning.

Historically, Rotter's (1966) locus of control and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory and construct of self-efficacy influenced the development of teacher efficacy. Bandura purported that self-efficacy is an individual's belief that he or she can organize and execute the courses of action required to produce certain outcomes. Several measures of efficacy underpinned by Bandura's principles were subsequently developed, with the most widely used being the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Other measures included: *Ashton Vignettes* instrument (1984), which was developed to make judgements on teachers' efficacy in dealing with common situations that a teacher might encounter in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001); Bandura's *Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale* (1990) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001); and the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES), developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy in 2001. This research focused on adapting TSES in a Caribbean context, and examining teacher efficacy among teachers across various school types.

Dimensions of Teacher Efficacy

A number of factorial validity investigations of the Gibson and Dembo scale confirmed two dimensions: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Similar to Rand, the dimension *general teaching efficacy* captured outcome expectancy, and *personal teaching efficacy* reflected self-efficacy, or a teacher's perceived ability to positively impact student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers who score high on these dimensions are expected to be confident teachers. Conversely, teachers who score low would be less determined and more disposed to

give up quickly. Emmer and Hickman (1990) adapted the Gibson and Dembo instrument by adding items to include teacher efficacy in classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), using factor analysis, generated the following three dimensions of their TSES: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. Roberts and Henson (2001) recommended the elimination of classroom management from the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy scale—the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES—following a confirmatory factor analysis where their results showed a strong two-factor model once classroom management was removed.

Teacher efficacy is related to the innovative utilization of the curriculum. Teachers with lower teacher efficacy scores (TES) were less likely to accommodate curriculum change and reform because they were less willing to move beyond their "comfort and safe zone" (Charalambous & Philippou, 2010, p. 14). Teachers with higher TES spend more time planning learning objectives and content than teachers with lower self-efficacy (Pan et al., 2013).

Studies revealed that teacher efficacy is a potent predictor of teachers' willingness to implement new instructional strategies. These findings suggest that teachers who are flexible in their teaching strategies are usually high in their teaching efficacy. Flexibility, or willingness to try new instructional strategies, is an important element in differentiation teaching, which makes it more likely that individual students' needs are met in the teaching-learning process (Cook, 2012; Leikin & Dinur, 2003).

Several studies show significant differences in teachers' efficacy in relation to the teaching of low achievers (Alderman, 1990; Soodak & Podell, 1996). Teachers who were successful in helping low-achieving students blended high levels of self-efficacy with realistic expectations for student achievement. Such teachers tended to make more teacher-based suggestions and had greater confidence in their abilities to effect change in their students than teachers who practised more non-teacher-based decisions and had lower levels of teacher efficacy (Soodak & Podell, 1996). Teachers who were less likely to seek solutions to the problems of difficult students outside of the classroom were more confident that they could influence change in their students (Alderman, 1990; Soodak & Podell, 1996).

Factors Influencing Teacher Efficacy

Research is not conclusive on the influence of variables such as teachers' age, gender, length of service, and status in the school hierarchy on teacher efficacy (Ignat & Clipa, 2010; Pan et al., 2013; Penrose, Perry, & Ball, 2007; Ross & Bruce, 2007; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). Yeo et al.'s (2008) study revealed that gender and length of service did not have an impact on their participants' teacher efficacy. Similarly, Penrose et al. (2007), in citing research by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2002), reported that using the TSES yielded no significant differences in age or gender. In addition, Penrose et al.'s results showed that teachers with more than 15 years of professional experience had a stronger sense of teacher efficacy than teachers with less than five years experience. Their study also suggests a positive relationship among teachers' expertise as professionals, their status in the school hierarchy, and their teacher efficacy. Similarly, Ignat and Clipa (2010) reported stronger levels of teacher efficacy as teachers' length of service increased. This finding was further confirmed by Pan et al.'s (2013) results, which indicated that teachers with high teacher efficacy had more experience, knowledge, and skills than those with low TSE.

Ross and Bruce (2007) designed a professional development programme to improve the efficacy of mathematics teachers, which involved 106 Grade 6 mathematics teachers. This method allowed the teachers to observe their effect on students' achievement, judge how well they attained their instructional goals, and reflect on their satisfaction. The TSES instrument, which has the following three domains, was used to determine teachers' efficacy:

- Efficacy for engagement – how much a teacher can motivate students who exhibit low interest in mathematics
- Efficacy of teaching strategies – how well a teacher can implement alternative mathematics strategies in the classroom
- Efficacy for classroom management – how much a teacher can calm a student who is disruptive or noisy during a mathematics class

Treatment teachers outperformed control group teachers on three measures of teacher efficacy—efficacy for engagement, efficacy of teaching strategies, and efficacy for classroom management—but results were statistically significant only for efficacy for classroom management. The authors felt that the result was influenced by the emphasis on classroom management during the professional development intervention.

Teachers exposed to training and professional support are likely to have higher levels of efficacy in the classroom. Woolfolk Hoy (2000) reported

higher levels of efficacy for teachers during training until they assumed full professional responsibility for a class. Woolfolk Hoy noted that when support was not available, teacher efficacy fell. Teacher efficacy for preservice teachers improved in Yeh's (2006) study following an intervention using computer simulated training. Yeh concluded that personal qualities such as analytical learning, self-awareness, and critical thinking interacted with guided practices and reflective teaching to bring about improvement in preservice teachers' efficacy.

School context and support systems can influence teachers' efficacy in the classroom. Teachers in schools with high track records are likely to be more efficacious than fellow teachers in regular schools where there is a greater mix of students with varying abilities (Chong, Klassen, Huan, Wong, & Kates, 2010); high-track schools have more resources and students are less challenging than those in the low-track schools.

The purpose of this study was to examine the reliability and validity of a modified version of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) TSES, and assess the extent to which gender, school type, years of service, and teacher status in the school's hierarchical system influenced teacher efficacy. The following research questions were asked:

1. *What are the dimensions of the modified "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale"*?
2. *Is there a relationship among the dimensions*?
3. *What is the impact of teachers' professional position in a school, length of service and school type on teacher efficacy?*

The study will assist other investigators of teacher efficacy in the Caribbean context in examining teacher efficacy, and in developing valid and reliable instruments in the Caribbean. The teacher efficacy instrument was modified to make the items more relevant to the context where the participants received their teacher training. Subsequently, factor analysis was generated to determine the factor structure of the modified instrument, and to ascertain whether the factor structure of the modified instrument is consistent with the theories that underpin the teacher efficacy construct.

Context of the Research

The formal school system in Jamaica is comprised of early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The schools are mainly in the public sector with limited private sector participation. Secondary schools are categorized as traditional or non-traditional. Traditional schools are grammar-type high schools established in the 1850s. Students who attend

these schools are selected mainly from the middle- and upper-income groups. The non-traditional schools are the new secondary schools established in the 1940s. The student population for these schools is from lower-income families. Students are placed in high schools after completing six years of compulsory education at the primary level, based on their grades in a national examination. Students selected to attend the traditional high schools attain pass marks of 80% and over in the national examination, while those selected for the non-traditional high school gain scores below 80%. Student selection for the non-traditional high schools is based on their performance on the national exam and, for the most part, a large percentage of the students who performed below 80% are from lower-income families. Prior achievements, therefore, determine the school type at the secondary level. Despite the report in 2009 that 85% of the teachers were trained professionals (attended teachers' college or university and obtained a diploma or degree in education), several schools still experience shortages of skilled teachers due to migration (Caribbean Policy Research Institute [CAPRI], 2012).

Method

Participants

A total of 905 classroom teachers selected from various school types across Jamaica participated in this research. The teachers indicated their position in the school on the questionnaire: 58% of the participants were subject teachers; 20% were senior teachers; and 21% were in administrative positions. Using Penrose et al.'s (2007) classification of high-status and low-status position in the school system, the subject teachers are classified as low status in the school system in the context of this study. The senior teachers and those in administrative positions (e.g., principal and vice-principal) are classified as being in the high-status position in the school system. Only 1% of the participants did not respond to the questionnaire. A multi-stage sampling technique was utilized, and at Stage 1, schools within four school types were selected: traditional high schools, non-traditional high schools, basic schools, and primary schools. At Stage 2, teachers were drafted using quota sampling, guided by the principle of population proportionate to size.

The majority of the participating teachers (48.3%) taught at the primary level (n = 702); 12% taught in traditional high schools (n = 128); 17% taught at non-traditional high schools (n = 182); and 3% in basic schools (n = 30). Basic schools are for children from 2 to 6 years of age.

Procedure

The teachers' efficacy instrument used in this study was an adaptation of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). The scale was modified by the author and two other experts from the School of Education at The University of the West Indies (UWI) for content validity. On the understanding that the modifications made the scale more contextually relevant to the curriculum at the teacher training institutions, the following three items were added to the original instrument:

1) I feel competent and confident to deliver the content of my subject area
2) I feel that I can cope with violent and aggressive students
3) I feel confident that I can influence the development of a student
4) I feel confident that I can research any problem in my teaching and arrive at a solution

Item 1 was included to determine teachers' efficacy in their subject matter. Dewey (1944) noted that teachers must know their content area very well to be able to give attention to other important matters, such as students' attitude and disposition during the teaching-learning sessions, "when engaged in the direct act of teaching, the instructor needs to have a subject matter at his fingers end…" (p. 183). Teachers lacking knowledge in their content area are likely not to be confident in having a holistic approach to their teaching.

The inclusion of Item 2 is supported by the Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI, 2012), which reported that violence and aggression in schools was one of the factors influencing teachers' migration to other countries. This ongoing issue has led to the inclusion of a course on violence aggression in the teacher training curriculum. Item 3 reflects the inclusion of action research in the teacher training curriculum. Action research was introduced in the teacher training curriculum to empower teachers to identify and solve problems they encounter in the classroom.

Items 3 and 4 are included because the training of teachers at the tertiary institution emphasized action research. All students must carry out an action research project and submit a report by the end of the second semester of their final year. Therefore, it is important to assess how confident the students are in carrying out action research in their practice.

The modified instrument consists of 21 items (see Appendix). The format of the response was changed from the 9-point rating scale to a dichotomous scale of *Agree* or *Disagree*. Respondents were required to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree using a weighting 1-10 (1 *very little* up to 10 *total agreement or disagreement*). All statements were

positive. If the respondent agreed with the statement, a positive score was indicated and if the respondent disagreed, a negative score was reflected. The Cronbach Alpha measurement for the instrument revealed a high internal consistency of 0.852.

Official permission was obtained from the principals of the participating schools. Undergraduate students were employed as research assistants to collect data in all six educational regions of the island, using copies of the instruments.

Results

Initially, the factorability of the 21-item teacher efficacy instrument was examined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin measure of sampling adequacy was .931 above the recommended value of 0.6, while Bartlett's test of sphericity was a significant X^2 (210) = 5581.91, $p < .05$. Finally, the communalities for the 21 items were not all above .3. Six of the 21 items had communalities below 0.3; after removal of the six items, the communalities were generated again and all 15 items had communalities above 0.3.

Principal components analysis (PCA) was used because the primary purpose was to identify and compute the factors underlying the modified teacher efficacy instrument. The initial eigen values showed that the first factor explained 34.51% of the variance, and the second factor 9.2% of the variance. The two factor solutions were examined, using both varimax and oblimin rotations of the factor loading matrix. The two-factor solution, which explained 43.71% of the variance, was preferred because of the "leveling off" of eigenvalues on the scree plot after two factors, and the results from the parallel analysis using Monte Carlo (see Table 1). There was little difference between the varimax and oblimin solutions (see Table 2).

Table 1. Comparison of Eigenvalues From PCA and Criterion Value From Parallel Analysis

Component Number	Actual Eigenvalue From PCA	Criterion Value From Parallel Analysis	Decision
1	5.176	1.2793	Accept
2	1.376	1.2313	Accept
3	0.923	1.1933	Reject

All items had primary loadings over .4. The pattern and structure matrix for PCA with oblimin rotation for two-solution is presented in Table 2. The factor labels are *personal teaching efficacy* (Factor 1 with 11 items); and *classroom management* (Factor 2 with four items (see Table 2). The two-factor solution explained 43.71% of the variance. The modified instrument, therefore, reflected two dimensions: flexibility and classroom management

Personal teaching efficacy (PTE) (Factor 2): Personal teaching efficacy refers to a teacher's belief that he/she has the competence and skills to influence student learning (Denzine et al., 2005; Yeh, 2006) (see Table 2). PTE involves the teacher agreeing or disagreeing with the statements about their confidence in their abilities as teachers to "overcome factors that could make learning difficult for a student" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 785). On the modified instrument, the teachers responded to 11 statements concerned with "the efficacy of their teaching." The items within this factor yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.854.

Classroom management (Factor 4): Emmer and Hickman (as cited in Denzine et al., 2005) argue that classroom management/discipline efficacy is distinct from the other categories of teacher efficacy. The item with the highest load for the classroom management factor reads: "I feel that I can cope with violent and aggressive students" (see Table 2). The items within this factor yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.646.

Table 2. Pattern and Structure Matrix for PCA With Oblimin Rotation for Two-Factor Solution

Items	Personal Teaching Efficacy		Classroom Management		Communalities
	Pattern	Structure	Pattern	Structure	
4. I feel competent to craft good questions for students to think critically	**0.651**	**0.633**	-0.046	0.201	0.403
21. I feel confident that I can research any problem in my teaching and arrive at a solution	**0.635**	**0.616**	-0.05	0.192	0.382

Items	Personal Teaching Efficacy		Classroom Management		Communalities
	Pattern	Structure	Pattern	Structure	
5. I can now implement alternative strategies in my classroom	**0.628**	**0.628**	0.002	0.240	0.395
6. I feel competent to respond to challenging questions from my students	**0.620**	**0.621**	0.002	0.238	0.386
18. I feel confident that I can help students think critically	**0.588**	**0.612**	-0.063	0.286	0.378
19. I feel confident that I can foster student creativity	**0.710**	**0.694**	-0.041	0.229	0.483
20. I feel confident that I can influence the development of students	**0.702**	**0.682**	-0.052	0.215	0.468
10. I feel competent to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom	-0.036	0.260	**0.776**	**0.763**	0.583
11. I feel I can establish a classroom management system with each group of students	0.173	0.404	**0.610**	**0.675**	0.482
12. I feel that I can cope with violent and aggressive students	-0.105	0.202	**0.807**	**0.767**	0.598
13. I feel confident to make my expectations clear about students' behaviour	0.387	0.530	**0.337***	**0.524**	0.403
14. I feel confident that I can get students to believe that they can do well at their school work	**0.612**	**0.612**	0.000	0.233	0.375

Items	Personal Teaching Efficacy		Classroom Management		Communalities
	Pattern	Structure	Pattern	Structure	
15. I feel confident that I can motivate students who show little interest in their school work	**0.647**	**0.665**	0.049	0.295	0.445
17. I feel confident that I can help students who are failing in their school work	**0.625**	**0.648**	0.060	0.298	0.424
1. I now feel competent and confident to deliver the content of my subject area	**0.589**	**0.592**	0.007	0.231	0.350

*Even though this item loaded the lowest on classroom management, subsequent qualitative examination confirmed that this item is most appropriately assigned to classroom management.

When the relationships between the factors were examined it was observed that both factors significantly correlated with each other ($r = 467$, $p < .01$) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Factors

		Personal Teaching Efficacy	Classroom Management
Personal Teaching Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.467**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	956	956
Classroom Management	Pearson Correlation	.467**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	956	956

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Figure 1, the distribution of the teachers' efficacy scores is negatively skewed, indicating a clustering of scores at the high end of the graph. This indicates that, overall, the level of teachers' efficacy in this study had a tendency towards the upper end of the scale (see Figure 1).

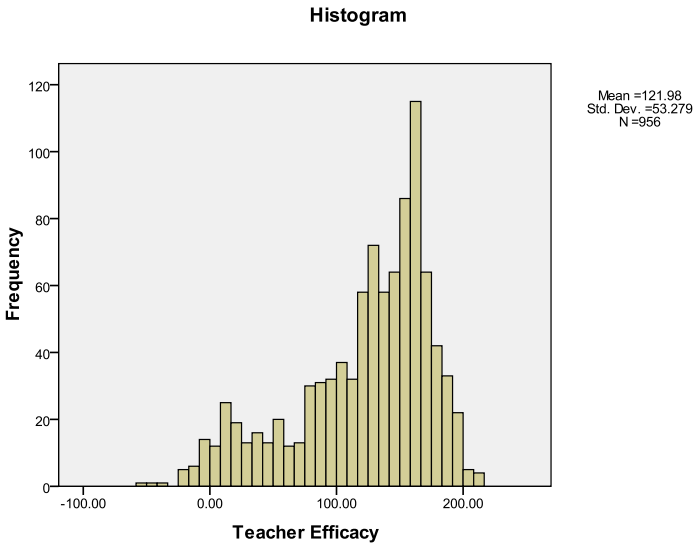

Figure 1. Distribution of the overall teacher efficacy scores.

Teacher Efficacy Across Gender, School Position, Years of Service, and School Type

In Table 4, one can observe differences in means and standard deviations for teacher efficacy scores based on the independent variables (teachers' professional position in schools, years of service, and school type). The ANOVA results indicate significant differences on teacher efficacy scores based on school types (p<.001: F (4,10117) = 6.67, p = <.001). Games-Howell post hoc evaluations indicated a difference between primary and basic schools. Teachers in primary schools had the lowest mean value for teacher efficacy, while basic school teachers had the highest. Similarly, there were significant differences in teacher efficacy based on teachers' professional position in the schools (F (6,1000) = 5.28, p≠.001). However, the Games-Howell post hoc evaluation did not identify differences between the groups. No significant difference was found in teacher efficacy scores based on years of service and - p>.05: F (2, 998) = 2.68, p=.069.

Table 4. Teacher Efficacy According to School Type, School Position, and Years of Service

Independent Variable	Teacher Efficacy Score		F	η^2
School Position	***Mean***	***SD***		
Education Officer	74	86.2	5.28***	0.031
Principal	77.2	62.8		
Vice-Principal	54.5	63.2		
HOD	106.5	65.5		
Senior Teacher	111.8	53.5		
Grade Coordinator	121.6	47.7		
Subject Teacher	121.5	46.7		
Years of Service				
Over 10 Years	74	86.2	2.68	0.005
5-10 Years	77.2	62.8		
Under 5 Years	54.5	63.2		
School Type				
Basic	110.4	62.1	7.01***	0.021
Primary	122	48.1		
Non-Traditional	105	55.2		
Traditional	107.3	53.5		

Note. * = $p \leq .05$, ***=$p \leq .001$.

The magnitude of the differences in the mean (mean difference = 8.42, 95% CI: 1.3 to 15) was very small (eta squared = .011). Extreme positive values in teacher efficacy were associated with teachers from the traditional high schools and primary schools (scores ranged from 206 to

210), whereas negative values in teacher efficacy were associated only with teachers from non-traditional high schools (scores ranged from -24 to -58) (see Table 5).

Additionally, as shown in Table 5, with equality of variance violated, there was a significant difference in scores for males (M = 119.5, SD = 48.9) and females (M = 111.101, SD = 54.5; *t* (1000) = 2.45, p = .019 (two tailed) (see Table 6).

Table 5. Extreme Values of the Five Highest and Five Lowest Scores

			Case Number	Value	Sch. Type
Teacher Efficacy	Highest	1	12	210.00	Traditional
		2	94	210.00	Primary
		3	316	210.00	Primary
		4	341	210.00	Primary
		5	477	206.00[a]	Primary
	Lowest	1	727	-58.00	Non-traditional
		2	505	-48.00	Non-traditional
		3	715	-34.00	Non-traditional
		4	256	-24.00	Non-traditional
		5	181	-24.00	Non-traditional

Note: [a] Only a partial list of cases with the value 206.00 are shown in the table of upper extremes.

Table 6. Mean Scores and SD of Teacher Efficacy by Gender

	Gender		*T*	*df*
	Male	**Female**		
Mean Score	119	111	2.44**	1000
	(48.9)	(54.5)		

Note. * = $p \leq .05$, ** = $p \leq .001$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Discussion

This research found that teachers in higher status positions had lower efficacy than those who held lower positions in the schools' hierarchy. This is not surprising, as in the Jamaican context, vice-principals and principals focus on administrative duties and school policies. This especially holds true in the high schools where the principals and vice-principals, after promotion from the rank of classroom teacher to principal, tend to become distant from classroom instruction. This leaves instruction largely in the hands of the heads of departments, senior teachers, grade coordinators, and subject teachers.

With regard to the position of teachers in the school organizational structure, the results showed a small, significant impact on teacher efficacy. According to the results in Table 3, the mean values (TES) for teachers in the following positions were: Education Officers = 74, principals = 77.2, vice-principals = 55.4, and senior teachers =111.8; senior teachers TES were much higher than teachers in the other positions. Penrose et al. (2007) found that teachers' status or position in the school organizational structure does have significant effects on teachers' efficacy. In their investigation, principals and vice-principals were categorized as high-status positions, while heads of departments, senior teachers, grade coordinators, and subject teachers were considered lower status positions. The posthoc results from this study did not concur with those of Penrose et al. (2007). Their findings revealed that the mean for teachers in lower status position was, for example, (M = 66.14, SD = 9.33) statistically different from both leading teachers (M = 76.84, SD = 9.49) and principals (M = 78.00, SD = 7.25). The difference between Penrose et al.'s findings and those reported in this study may be due to the different cultural contexts and structure of the educational settings of the two studies.

The cumulative explained variance was 43.71%, and the best model was a four-factor one, with loadings between 0.33 and 0.807. The items did not cluster into the well-defined dimensions that Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) observed in their original scale: efficacy of instructional strategies, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for student engagement. Instead, the dimensions were relabelled *personal teaching efficacy* and *classroom management*. Note the retention of one of the original labels from Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy—classroom management.

Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) noted that statements on PTE "reflect confidence that they have adequate training or experience to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning. These teachers may well have experienced past success in boosting students'

achievement" (p. 785). On the modified instrument, items measure teachers' confidence in the delivery of the subject content, the utilization of various teaching and assessment techniques in the delivery process of teaching, and the use of research in the classroom to facilitate better teaching and learning.

A teacher must be very confident in his/her subject content in order to be able to pay attention to how students' attitude and response (student's need and capacities) interplay with the teaching of the content (Dewey, 1944). When the teacher can observe this interplay, then he or she can develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning and, by implementing alternative strategies (Item 5), feel competent to provide appropriate challenges for exceptional students (item 9), foster students' creativity (Item 19), and feel confident about influencing students' development (Item 20).

Classroom management items measure the teachers' confidence in using behavioural strategies to encourage and increase desirable students' behavioural responses. Classroom management was added to the Gibson and Dembo efficacy scale by Emmer and Hickman in 1990, who adapted the instrument (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Also, Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy identified this dimension as an important dimension on their scale—Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES). Based on Roberts and Henson's (2001) concerns regarding the low loadings on the classroom management factor, Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy responded by stating:

> we suspected that the weakness of the management factor might be the consequence of the brevity of the 3-item scale. So, rather than eliminate this scale, we decided to write more items to capture this potentially important dimension of teacher efficacy. (p. 798)

There were significant differences in teacher efficacy based on gender, school type, and teacher position in the organizational structure. Although the context of the study differs, the results give support to the findings of Chong et al. (2010) that teacher efficacy varied with school type. Chong et al. found that high-efficacy teachers were associated with high-performing students while low-efficacy teachers were linked with low-performing schools.

Conclusion

In summary, the factor analysis yielded useful information. It identified the underlying dimensions of the modified teacher efficacy scale: personal teacher efficacy and classroom management. The two factors align with

the literature: classroom management as a dimension of teacher efficacy was identified by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001); personal teacher efficacy identified by Gibson and Dembo (as cited by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Exciting possibilities for teacher training in the Caribbean lie ahead as researchers continue to examine the effects of teachers' beliefs on their practices, and to examine the influence of variables such as school type, gender, and teachers' professional position in schools on teachers' confidence to teach and affect students' learning.

For future research, it is suggested that the number of items for the classroom management factor could be increased. This would improve on the present Cronbach Alpha results and increase the factor loadings. Future research could also involve the investigation of the impact of the independent variables (gender, school type, and teachers' professional position in the school) on the two factors of teacher efficacy identified in this study.

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Appendix

Modified Teacher Efficacy Instrument

Below are some statements about how you feel regarding the impact of your training in the Department of Educational Studies (UWI) on your professional development as a teacher. For each statement please show if you **Agree or Disagree (by circling the A or D**) and then indicate to what extent Agree or Disagree; 1-10 (1 very little up to 10 total Agreement or Disagreement).

Since my training:	For Example:	A	D 6
1. I now feel competent and confident to deliver the content of my subject area		A	D _____
2. I can now use a variety of assessment strategies		A	D _____
3. I am more competent to provide alternative explanation or example when students are confused		A	D _____
4. I feel competent to craft good questions for students to think critically		A	D _____
5. I can now implement alternative strategies in my classroom		A	D _____
6. I feel competent to respond to challenging questions from my students		A	D _____
7. I can now adjust my lessons to the proper level for individual students		A	D _____
8. I feel competent to gauge students comprehension for what I have taught		A	D _____
9. I feel competent to provide appropriate challenges for exceptional students		A	D _____
10. I feel competent to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom		A	D _____

11. I feel I can establish a classroom management system with each group of students	A	D _____
12. I feel that I can cope with violent and aggressive students	A	D _____
13. I feel confident to make my expectations clear about students behavior	A	D _____
14. I feel confident that I can get students to believe that they can do well at their school work	A	D _____
15. I feel confident that I can motivate students who show little interest in their schoolwork	A	D _____
16. I feel confident that I can assist families in helping their children do well in schoolwork	A	D _____
17. I feel confident that I can help students who are failing in their schoolwork	A	D _____
18. I feel confident that I can help students think critically	A	D _____
19. I feel confident that I can foster student creativity	A	D _____
20. I feel confident that I can influence the development of students	A	D _____
21. I feel confident that I can research any problem in my teaching and arrive at a solution	A	D _____

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TEACHING ABOUT RELIGIONS: "Playing for Change"

Sandra Gift, Hart Edwards, Merle Hodge, Grace Sirju-Charran, and *Susan Shurland*

This paper advocates for the introduction of teaching about religions in schools in Trinidad and Tobago, and presents a preliminary strategy to this end. The background to the paper is a National Commission for UNESCO project, for which one of the major goals was to determine the status and feasibility of Teaching About World Religions (TAWR) in schools. The initiative involved: (a) a survey conducted in a sample of schools in 2008; (b) a symposium (January 2010); (c) a workshop (October 2010); and (d) a presentation at the Ministry of Education consultation on the primary school curriculum in 2011. Some of the consultation feedback revealed societal fears arising from a misunderstanding of the purpose of educating young people about religions other than their own. The paper argues that greater knowledge and understanding of the tenets of our various religions are critical for promoting harmony in diversity. Historically, interfaith relations have been marked by disrespect and persecution of some faiths. While there has been decided improvement at official levels in the 52 years of independence, there exists a legacy of mutual intolerance, prejudice, and mistrust, based largely on lack of information. The formal education system does not adequately address this legacy. The authors considered the nomenclature for such a programme, and propose a preliminary framework and implementation strategy for teacher training and curriculum materials development for interreligious studies.

Introduction

This paper has its genesis in the work of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO over the period 2007 to 2011 when, with increasing levels of social anxiety, the Commission became concerned about the need for increased levels of peace and tolerance in the national community. The Commission was of the view that the introduction and effective teaching of Comparative Religion could be a key intervention to support and foster increased peace, tolerance, and harmony in the national community. Mindful of the multicultural context of Trinidad and Tobago,

the National Commission for UNESCO initiated a project for introducing the teaching of Comparative Religion in the nation's school system.

The objectives identified for introducing Comparative Religion in the school curriculum were to: (i) develop respect for other religions, while remaining strong in one's own belief system, and to include atheism and agnosticism even though these belief systems are not religions; (ii) expose students to different religious teachings in order to foster tolerance and peaceful coexistence; (iii) promote a better appreciation of the tenets of other religions and facilitate an understanding of the similarities and differences among them, with a view to affirming and managing diversity; and (iv) gather data and build consensus (focus on issues to be overcome to implement Comparative Religion). Following consultation with religious leaders a fifth objective was added: (v) explore the mis-education implicit in the "languaging" of religion, with a view to addressing prejudices and stereotypes. The authors use the expression *languaging of religion* to capture the ways in which negative connotations are conveyed via various styles of speech about particular religions (e.g., *pagan*, *obeah*, *idol worship*) (Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, 2011).

This intervention on the part of the National Commission for UNESCO is consistent with the pillar of learning No 3: "Learning to Live Together," presented in the "Delors Report," *Learning: The Treasure Within* (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, Delors, & UNESCO, 1996), which states, inter alia, that:

> by teaching young people to adopt the point of view of other ethnic or religious groups, the lack of understanding that leads to hatred and violence among adults can be avoided. The teaching of the history of religions and customs can thus serve as a useful benchmark for future behaviour. (p. 93)

Concept of Religion

Defining the word *religion* was found to be problematic. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with *faith*, and is commonly defined as belief about the supernatural, sacred, or divine; and the moral codes, practices, ways of life, and institutions associated with such belief. In its broadest sense some have defined it as the sum total of answers given to explain the relationship of human beings with the universe**.** The authors accept these concepts of religion. For the purpose of this initiative, however, the authors extend the concept of religion to include agnosticism, atheism, and humanism in the teaching about religions, in order to include

the beliefs and practices of these communities. *Agnosticism* refers to the belief that "we don't have knowledge of God and that it is impossible to prove that God exists or does not exist…"; that we should suspend judgement about "some types of knowledge, such as the soul, immortality, heaven, hell and extraterrestrial life" (Shouler, 2010, p. 277). *Atheism* refers to the belief that "gods do not or God does not exist…." It is "the disbelief in any kind of supernatural existence that is supposed to affect the universe" (Shouler, 2010, p. 277).

The authors also refer to UNESCO's concept of humanism, which is the recognition that "beyond our diversity we all share one common human culture" (Bokova, 2010, p. 4), which could only be achieved through "mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue" (Bokova, 2010, p. 5) brought about by the "intellectual and moral cooperation of [ALL] humanity" (Bokova, 2010, p. 4) through a "recognition of common values in the diversity of cultures" (Bokova, 2010, pp. 5-6).

Clarification of Terms

Terms that require clarification in Teaching about Religions (TaR) include *Religious Instruction* (RI) and *Religious Education* (RE). TaR is distinct from RI, which focuses on the teaching of one particular religion with a view to religious induction/persuasion or reinforcement, in that its goal is to educate on all religions. Some persons use RE interchangeably with TaR, as in the case of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) presentation in this paper. However, RE and RI are used synonymously by others. The preferred of these three terms is TaR since it is less likely to be confused with RI.

In the course of the preliminary phases of the project, the title of the subject was changed from Comparative Religion (CR) to Teaching About World Religions (TAWR) because it was felt by both experts and participants that the word *Comparative* was value-laden, and could imply that some religions were superior to others. On further reflection, the authors opted to use the term *Teaching about Religions* (TaR) since the focus will be on the religions of Trinidad and Tobago.

Interreligious Studies (IS)

The change to TaR was not the final change, however, since the authors' review of an article by Rietveld-van Wingerden, ter Avest, and Westerman (2012) showed that the concept *Interreligious Studies* (IS) more accurately reflected the aims and objectives of the UNESCO-funded project. Therefore the authors, at the end of that project, decided to establish a Working Group on Interreligious Studies (WGIS) for development and

implementation of a project on introducing IS in the schools of Trinidad and Tobago and the anglophone Caribbean. This notwithstanding, the term TaR is used in the rest of this paper since the terminology IS was adopted at the conclusion of stage four of the project.

In Europe, "support of interreligious education goes back four hundred years" (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., 2012, p. 70) to when John Amos Comenius, a Christian theologian, educationalist, and school reformer, who was victim of several religious clashes, adopted an open inclusive stance to interreligious education. This support continues today as evident in the European Union's research project on religion and education (REDCo), initiated in 2006 to "explore pupils' perception and reception of religion." A key finding of REDCo was the emphasis placed by the young people on the importance of "knowledge as a means to more mutual understanding and tolerance" (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., 2012, p. 57). The finding reported by Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. about the value of interreligious education was influential in the eventual decision made about nomenclature for the initiative that is the subject of this paper. Specifically, Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. reported that:

> The REDCo project and earlier research clearly indicate that interreligious education is the most promising concept for schools in terms of enhancing reciprocal comprehension between people affiliated to different secular or religious life orientations and stimulating mutual respect and tolerance. (p. 58)

Trinidad and Tobago as a Multi-Religious Society

Trinidad and Tobago, with its history of indigenous peoples, colonization, slavery, indentureship, and migration entered the 20th century already a multi-religious society. Beginning in the pre-independence era, certain steps have been taken at the level of the State to affirm and embrace the reality of a multi-religious society. In 1951, the Legislative Council repealed the Shouter Baptist Prohibition Ordinance of 1917.

An Inter-Religious Organization (IRO), comprised of representatives of the different faiths, was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1973. The IRO enjoys the status of a consultative and resource group to government and other bodies. The State has granted one public holiday each to the Hindu, Muslim, and Spiritual Baptist faiths. Originally, all religious public holidays were holy days of the Catholic Church. Hindu, Muslim, and Orisha marriages have been given legal recognition. Interfaith prayers are held at official events. After a spate of incidents in which some schools

sought to exclude children wearing clothing or hairdressing emblematic of some faiths, the State ruled in favour of tolerance.

In keeping with efforts being made in the post-independence era to remove stigma accrued in the colonial era by religions other than the approved Christian church, a 19th century ordinance banning "obeah" was repealed in 2000.

However, while officialdom moves towards inclusiveness, among the general population there remain some deep-seated attitudes of disrespect and prejudice against religions other than the dominant Christian church. There is a tendency to paint them with the brush of "superstition" (another example of "languaging") because their theology, like the belief systems of all religions, includes articles of faith that cannot be proven scientifically.

Orisha and the Spiritual Baptist faith continue to be associated, by some, with negative forces, including devil worship. Some people have a fear of being contaminated by religious practices and phenomena that they misunderstand, such as spirit manifestation or "catching power," a feature of these two faiths. Some fear spiritual contamination from food consecrated in any non-Christian rite, for example, the "parsad" that Hindus share with neighbours as part of prayer services. Hindus, loosely referred to as Indians, are said to worship idols and some to engage with evil forces. Religious prejudice feeds into racist stereotyping; in propagating the stereotype of the "dishonest" Indian, some people assert that Hinduism imposes on its devotees the obligation to acquire riches by any means available, honest or not.

The Evolution of Religious Education in Schools

Religious bodies played a very important part in the provision of schooling in both Trinidad and Tobago in the 19th century at both primary and secondary level. This role continued in the 20th century, and was modified and formalized in the Concordat of 1960, a pre-independence agreement between the government and denominational boards. It assured these boards their ownership and right of direct control and management of all denominational primary and secondary schools, inter alia (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001, p. 7).

After the abolition of slavery, "the British government directed that compulsory Christian education be given to the children of the ex-slaves, under a scheme financed by a grant of 25,000 pounds from the British treasury called the Negro Education Grant" (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001, p. 9) and a system of ward schools began to evolve in Trinidad and

Tobago. The first sustained efforts at teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago took place in relation to this initiative.

Anglican, Baptist, Canadian Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Moravian, and Wesleyan missionaries, serving the dual roles of evangelist and educator, established the first schools in Trinidad. In 1863, the first denominational secondary school in Trinidad was established as part of the colonial school system.

The Keenan Report, 1869

In 1851, Lord Harris, then Governor of Trinidad, outlined a system of free secular education at the primary level. This met with opposition from the Roman Catholics and in 1869, as opposition to Harris' system became more widespread, Patrick J. Keenan, who was Inspector of Schools in Ireland, was appointed to make a full inquiry into the state of education in Trinidad and to make recommendations. Keenan severely criticized the system and made numerous recommendations, many of which were diametrically opposed to the system developed from Harris' proposals. Among Keenan's recommendations was that: management of each ward school be vested in the clergymen of the same religion as the majority of the pupils (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001, p. 10).

The Concordat of 1960

Before Independence in 1962, primary and secondary education was provided by the State as well as by the Christians (e.g., Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians), Hindus, and Muslims. The Methodists and the African Methodist Episcopalians (AME) were active providers of education at the primary level.

Among the provisions of the Concordat (Trinidad and Tobago. Ministry of Education, 1960) were that students would be exclusively taught the religion of the religious denomination owning the school but other religions would not be forced to participate; and at government schools, accredited representatives would provide RE classes of all faiths, separately, during the designated period. RE here more than likely would have related to instruction in a particular faith or RI.

The Concordat also formalized arrangements for the provision of teachers and the operation of teacher training colleges, which eventually came to be exclusively owned and operated by the State. Accelerated expansion of school provision at both primary and secondary levels, by both the State and the denominations, took place.

The 20th century witnessed further considerable expansion of the school system. In addition to the Christian religions that were part of the

Concordat, Moravians, Seventh-day Adventists, the Open Bible, London Baptists, and, more recently, the Pentecostals and the Shouter Baptists also established schools and school boards. Similarly, Muslims (Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association (ASJA), Tackveeyatul Islamic Association (TIA), and Trinidad Muslim League (TML)) and Hindus (Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, Kabir Panth Association (KPA), and the Vedics) established schools and school boards (www.moe.edu.tt).

The Training College Curriculum

In 1956, there were three denominational training colleges (two Catholic and one Presbyterian) and one government training college. The curriculum of denominational colleges included religious instruction. Under the regulations of the dual system, the assisted schools retained ownership and overall control of their institutions while receiving government aid. It therefore meant that the Presbyterian Church was the governing agency for Naparima Training College, with the responsibility for appointing a principal and the teaching staff. The same arrangement applied to the Roman Catholic training colleges.

With the establishment of government teacher training colleges, the Christian churches did not resist closure of Naparima Training College or the Roman Catholic Women's College, since both the Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholic Church conceded that they represented a financial burden. In terms of denominational teacher education, only the Caribbean Union College, run by the Seventh-day Adventists and not normally assisted by the government, retained a small teacher training unit, set up in 1960. From the 1970s, the Caribbean Union College began to expand its teacher training activities to offer a B.A. in Education in association with Andrews University, USA (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001, p. 17). Currently, neither the Valsayn Teacher's Training College, The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), nor the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI) includes RE or TaR as part of their curriculum.

The period since 1962 has seen no significant change in the fundamental arrangements rooted in the Concordat. Rather, it has seen the education system expand, especially the State sector, and, latterly, an increase in the number of denominational schools, especially at secondary level.

Stages of the Project

The project's journey consisted of four stages.

Stage 1

A **preliminary surve**y was carried out in 2008 to determine to what extent CR/(TaR) was being taught in the schools. Of the questionnaires sent out to approximately 125 secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, 43 (or approximately 34%) were completed and returned. The survey was not administered to the denominational schools since, apart from a 20% intake specific to the particular faith, their intake constitutes students of all faiths and they have no option but to follow the particular faith of the denominational school. The sample showed a weak profile of TaR in the schools but a high level of readiness to accept its possible introduction among educators who, convinced of its benefits, recorded challenges that would have to be addressed if this subject were to be introduced.

At those secondary schools that purported to teach TaR, it was subsumed under other subjects—Social Studies, Sociology, History, Moral Education, and Caribbean Studies. At the primary school it was included in Health and Family Life Education, and Reading and Comprehension. There was no dedicated slot in the curriculum for TaR. The religious education that is institutionalized in the schools is worship and instruction in the tenets of specific religions. In government schools a weekly period is timetabled for Religious Instruction, provided by visiting resource persons to students belonging to their particular faith.

An overwhelming majority of respondents gave very positive and enthusiastic responses to the question: "What, in your view, could be the value of teaching Comparative Religion in the schools of Trinidad and Tobago?" Many referred with pride to "*our rich diversity*"; "*our multi-religious society*"; "*our multicultural society*"; "*our cultural diversity*"; "*our pluralistic society*"; "*our cosmopolitan society.*" On the other hand, there were some concerns raised by a minority of respondents. These included, for example, the appropriateness of the subject for the primary school level, the need for trained teachers, and the possibility of proselytization.

Stage 2

A **symposium** was held on January 25th, 2010, at which the findings of the survey were shared with representatives of major stakeholder groups: CXC; the IRO; representatives of various religions; Ministry of Education Curriculum Officers, school principals, and teachers. One of the key presentations dealt with the CXC curriculum for RE.

The CXC Perspective

Ms. Cherryl Stephens, Assistant Registrar of Syllabus and Curriculum Development, CXC, presented a paper on the CXC RE curriculum. CXC is a regional examining body that provides examinations for secondary and post-secondary candidates in Caribbean countries in a wide range of subjects (CXC, 2015). Ms. Stephens argued that while the content of the RE curriculum had relevance for pursuing a career in Religion, Medicine, Social Work, and Law Enforcement, it also contributed to a good general education and supported the vision of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Education Strategy to create the *ideal Caribbean person* who is "emotionally secure and has a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem; sees ethnic, religious and other diversity as a source of potential strength and richness and has an informed respect for our cultural heritage" (CARICOM Secretariat, 2011).

The syllabus was completed in 1990 with Christianity as the only available option. Further options in Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism were completed in 2010. The majority of candidates writing the exam were from Jamaica, with about 3% coming from Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Belize. Trinidad and Tobago entered candidates (mainly from the prisons) in 2004; but since 2007, candidates are also being entered from Bishop Anstey High School East and Trinity College East.

Among the challenges identified for this subject were the shortage of trained teachers and the fact that it was not being introduced at the lower secondary level, which means that it competes with better-known subjects for which there is already a base. In addition, it is probably seen as a subject that is important for those interested in pursuing a career in Religion but not relevant for other careers. It is also perceived as an option for "weaker/less academic" students.

The CXC RE curriculum goals are to:

- develop understanding of the meaning and purpose of life as advanced by different religions practised in the Caribbean;
- encourage informed dialogue among various cultural and religious organisations and groups to foster harmony and peace among people of diverse customs and beliefs within the Caribbean;
- encourage a critical and reflective approach to religious beliefs and practices;
- encourage appreciation and respect for various beliefs systems;
- create an awareness of the diversity and commonality that exist in religion;

- create an awareness of our religious heritage as a Caribbean people. (CXC, 2010, p. 1)

Among the criteria for content selection are that it should be:

- useful in developing knowledge, awareness of and respect for the value placed by others on their religious beliefs and practices; and
- helpful to students in clarifying their own belief systems, dealing with issues and resolving conflicts. (CXC, 2010, p. 2)

Perspectives of Representatives from Different Faiths

A panel of leaders from five different faiths (Muslim, Orisha; Spiritual Baptist, Hindu, and Christianity) identified challenges and benefits of introducing CR/TaR, and noted that it:

- addresses "a profound need to consider seriously … those aspects of religion that proclaim unity, peace and love"; to find "convergence"; and to teach "our children to make these contacts joyful, creative and positive…";
- should be seen as a "model of co-existence" to promote harmony in diversity which would bring about a quantum leap in the way we see others, and in restoring our own humanity";
- would address the need to focus on "preparation for life, and on critical and analytical thinking in the education system";
- would serve to dispel fear and refute myths about different religions, leading to respect, while allowing for exposure to moral, ethical, and spiritual values.

The challenges included:

- use of the title CR, which could be interpreted to mean "affirmation of self while comparing one's own religion with other religions or "World Religion," which as used by Americans was restricted to northern, western European religions. Suggestions for a title included: "Belief Systems" or "Introduction to the Study of Religion";
- prejudices against certain religions that have become embedded in language and popular culture;
- the limitations imposed by the use of English language for communicating certain fundamental concepts in different religions (e.g., Hinduism and Orisha);
- possible prejudices/biases of teachers;

- resistance by some religious leaders based on the fear of losing membership.

Some of the perspectives of participants, as reported through working groups, related to the place of CR in the curriculum; the level at which it should be introduced; the approach to teacher training, and a variety of issues pertinent to the introduction of CR/TaR. Some of the recommendations have been incorporated in the proposed Framework for TaR. Participants agreed, inter alia, that the rationale for inclusion of CR/TaR in the curriculum would be the study of diverse belief systems to promote respect, harmony, understanding, self-esteem, and self-realization, leading to peaceful coexistence. Standards and benchmarks cannot be determined in isolation, but must take into account the national curriculum and policy. The informal approach should be used at the primary school level, and even at the lower secondary level, as a good way to introduce it; and then it should be made examinable at the CXC level.

Stage 3

A **2-day workshop** with the theme "Harmony in Diversity: Towards Best Practice in Teaching World Religions" was held on October 5 and 6, 2010. Participants and presenters included educators, representatives from religious bodies and non-governmental organizations, experts in the field of CR, and subject specialists. The focus was on international and regional best practices, content, and methodology for teaching CR.

The first keynote speaker, Professor Anantanand Rambachan, Chair and Professor of Religion, Philosophy and Asian Studies at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota, USA, spoke on "International Trends/Current Practices in Teaching Comparative Religion: Impact and Effectiveness of This Teaching." He insisted that:

> *The first and perhaps most important principle and practice to be honoured is that religious education must be a teaching about religion and not religious indoctrination or the teaching of religion. This is the critical principle on which religious education in schools may succeed or fail*.

He commented on the term *Comparative Religion*, suggesting that it carries the baggage of assessing the relative merits of different religions and the implication of superiority of one over the other. He proposed the alternative *Teaching about Religions*.

He noted that the proposal to introduce TaR into the schools of Trinidad and Tobago does not include any suggestion to interfere with the delivery of RI. TaR and RI are simply different undertakings, and they can coexist

in the schools of our nation. He cited Modesto City Schools, California as an example of the successful introduction of TaR, where it resulted in increased student support for the rights of others, facilitated a fuller appreciation of the core moral values shared across traditions, and did not encourage students to change their own religious convictions.

Citing the guidelines originally published by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright University, Professor Rambachan presented the following principles relevant to TaR:

- It is *academic*, not *devotional*. Its purpose is not to create religious experience.
- It strives for student *awareness* of religions, but not *acceptance* of any one religion.
- Its focus is *study* about religion not the *practice* of religion.
- It *exposes* students to a diversity of religious views without *imposing* any.
- It *educates* about all religions, but does not *promote* or *denigrate* any.
- It *informs* the student about various beliefs, but does not seek to *conform* him/her to any particular belief.

The second keynote speaker was Ms. Grace Peart, Curriculum Officer, Ministry of Education, Jamaica, who shared the Jamaican experience in an address entitled "Curriculum Development and Implementation for Comparative Religion: A Case Study." She, too, cited the dangers of using the term *Comparative Religion*, in that it encourages the drawing of conclusions from comparison of the various religions and judgement about individual religions, thus making impartiality and lack of bias more difficult. She also cited nine good reasons for teaching RE and gave an overview of the topics taught at the various levels in the school system in Jamaica. The establishment of a Religious Education Teacher Association, comprising resource persons from the major religions, was helpful in the designing of the curriculum. Major challenges have been lack of trained personnel and fundamentalist Curriculum Officers. In describing the Jamaican experience of introducing CR, she highlighted the importance of long and thorough preparation and consultation preceding the change, and of involvement especially of curriculum staff, both to secure buy-in and to ensure proper implementation.

Stage 4

Ministry of Education (MOE) Primary School Curriculum Consultation, 5th April 2011

Presentation on Teaching about Religion

The Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO presented a proposal for the introduction of CR/TaR in schools at the MOE's Primary Schools Curriculum Consultation. The Commission indicated its support for the training of Curriculum Officers in TaR. Some religious groups stated that TaR should be conducted at home and not at school. Some participants misinterpreted TaR to mean RI. There was also concern about the overcrowded curriculum, and some argued that TaR was already included in the social studies curriculum.

Benefits to be derived from TaR were recognized, but participants reiterated the need for careful curriculum planning and teacher training. They supported it as a "stand alone" subject, which might be better handled at the secondary level rather than the primary level.

Summary of Public Response to the Introduction of TaR in Schools After the April 2011 Ministry of Education Consultation on the Primary School Curriculum

The announcement at the MOE Consultation on the Primary School Curriculum by Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education, that TaR would be introduced in schools elicited a response on the part of newspaper columnists, persons affiliated with different faiths, and some members of the general citizenry, communicated via articles and comments appearing in the *Daily Express*, *Trinidad Guardian*, and *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday* newspapers during the month of April 2011. A partial list of titles of articles and their authors is provided in the Appendix.

Misunderstandings About Teaching Religious Education and Rebuttals Thereto

These comments revealed a misunderstanding of the purpose of TaR as well as conflicting concepts of RE, with some commentators, for example, equating it with religious formation or shaping of children's religious identity. TaR was understood, for example, as an intent to make students "more religious"; as bringing into schools religious leaders from different denominations to cater to the students of particular faiths; as providing students who did not belong to the denomination of the schools they attend

with information about the customs and practices of the various religions; and with a focus on moral and spiritual values.

One commentator argued that RE would disrupt the true purpose of schools, which is to educate and advance the nation. He argued further that RE would open wounds of the past when only one religion dominated the island, and would result in many children feeling vulnerable and unaccepted. Another commentator expressed the view that religion is man-made not God-made; that it should be left out of the nation's public schools as religion has caused more division than unification among people.

On the contrary, however, TaR, as delineated in this project, is intended to foster greater respect and harmony in society. TaR is intended precisely to avoid young people knowing principally about the predominant religions in Trinidad and Tobago society, but rather to have them become knowledgeable about other religions, that is, the beliefs and practices of other religions. For too long, persons belonging to non-western traditions have been ridiculed and ostracized, even feared. Those wounds are in need of healing, so as not to recur in future generations.

A Question of Choice

Other commentators were of the view that no government or group of persons ought to make it mandatory that students be exposed to religious education; that this should be a question of freedom and right to choose, with parents or guardians giving their consent. There was a word of caution against "confusing our children at this tender age with choices"; that religion should remain a personal matter never to be interfered with by the State; that it should be left to the home and to the society that must demonstrate the values they preach**.** Accordingly, there were commentators who proposed alternatives to TaR aimed at fostering a sense of citizenship and social responsibility, and promoting the value of good moral behaviour. These alternatives, however, would not achieve the objectives of TaR presented earlier in this paper.

Questions Posed

Some of the questions posed by commentators implicitly convey the fears of some in society that TaR could do more harm than good**.** For example, questions posed in the *Newsday* Editorial of 6th April, 2011 (Teaching ethics, 2011) queried whether TaR would be an imposition of beliefs on vulnerable young people who should be allowed to pursue their own search for truth in the years to come, or whether it would help to open up such avenues; whether it would be taught simply as a dry academic humanities subject like history, or could only truly be taught with a faith

expert, and, if so, how would one regulate/monitor/measure the impact of "faith"; whether parents would have the right to opt out of their child receiving such mandatory teachings, some of which the family might find offensive; whether the rights of atheist/agnostic parents, or those who simply wish their children to have a secular education, would be respected and whether the faith aspect and the legends of various religions would be taught or just their basic ethics; and should the subject be taught by academicians or by practitioners of the faith?

These are important questions and must be taken into account in the design of curricula for TaR. They indicate a need for a public education programme clarifying the nature and goals of a TaR programme for our nation's schools. Against the background of the CXC RE curriculum, in the public discussion commentators used the terminology RE to discuss TaR.

Comments in Support of RE (TaR)

The public discussion also revealed some strong support for RE. Comments supportive of the initiative welcomed it as an opportunity to share information for greater understanding of all religions. Benefits of RE identified included appreciation, respect, and acceptance of religions; mutual enrichment which assumes mutual exchange that could complement one another's faith; reinforcement of one's own religious position; recognizing the dynamism and differences found within each religious tradition; serving as a source of values education that could be translated into moral and ethical behaviour; development of a sense of identity and preparation for life in a multicultural, multi-religious society and world; increasing students' social and political awareness (e.g., rights and responsibilities); contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development; helping students to understand and respect people of different beliefs, races, and cultures; and helping students to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life.

Preliminary Framework for Teacher Training and Curriculum and Materials Development for TaR

Given the foregoing, the authors considered it appropriate to progress from survey, discussion, and seminars to action focused on programme design and implementation. Therefore it was decided to articulate principles towards a philosophy for teacher training and student development, and to propose goals, content, pedagogy, and implementation strategy for TaR, as set out in the preliminary framework that follows.

Philosophy

The philosophy for TaR must reflect the following principles:

1. be consistent with UNESCO's pillar of learning No 3: "Learning to Be" and with UNESCO's concept of *Humanism* referenced earlier in this paper
2. contribute to formation of the ideal Caribbean citizen who, inter alia,
    - respects his/her cultural heritage
    - sees differences in religion, race, and gender as a source of strength and richness
    - is morally responsible and accountable to self and community
    - demonstrates a belief in the moral value of work, that is, has a good work ethic
    - has the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to improve his physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being
    - is emotionally secure with a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem
    - is aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment (CARICOM Secretariat, 2011)
3. be supportive of the Ministry of Education's "Vision for the Children of Trinidad and Tobago" (www.moe.edu.tt)
4. emphasize religious*, social**, and pedagogical*** principles of Interreligious Studies:

    **Religious* principle: promotes the idea that all religious traditions describe people's efforts to make life meaningful and aims to avoid the notion of one's own identity being inspired by "the only true religion."

    ***Social* principle: highlights multi-culturality and multi-religiosity as basic characteristics of society, with the school being considered "a micro-community—a space for pupils to practice living together in a plural society" (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., 2012, p. 60).

    ****Pedagogical* principle: considers the primary aim of education to be the development of (future) citizens. In this regard, cognitive knowledge about "the facts of life" and knowledge (cognitive as well as experiential) about what inspires and motivates us for "the good life" are important. The school is not a "factory of knowledge." It is, in the first place, a space for personal identity formation. This includes "the development of cognitive skills and

> emotional, empathic, social, religious and moral competencies…" The concept of transformation of the student is important. Students' actual knowledge, constructed in the family and peer group settings, "should be built on and transformed into new, more articulated ways of thinking and experiencing with regard to religion" (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., 2012, p. 60)

Goals of TaR

The proposed goals of TaR are to:

1. enhance peace and harmony in the national community
2. create an awareness of our religious heritage as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago
3. foster an awareness of both the diversity and the commonalities to be found across religions in Trinidad and Tobago
4. encourage students to appreciate and respect the various belief systems present in Trinidad and Tobago, while remaining strong in their individual belief systems

Proposed Content

1. Core tenets of the faiths of the people of Trinidad and Tobago
2. Principal practices, including office holders; festivals; acts and expressions of worship; forms of dress; implements; methods of personal spiritual development; sacred spaces; role of food and water; role of sacred plants
3. History and holy texts (written and oral) of each religion
4. Issues, for example:
    - Prejudice and stereotyping in the "languaging" of religion
    - Religious intolerance
    - Religious wars and conflicts
    - Gender and hegemony
    - Ethnicity, identity, and religion

Pedagogy

- Develop learning outcomes appropriate to each level of the school system
- Integrate new technologies
- Conduct mini research projects

- Use songs, videos, creative activities such as art; writing of reflective pieces
- Visits to sacred places; respectful observation of other forms of worship

Teacher Training

The issue of teacher training has emerged as critical to any implementation of TaR in the nation's schools. There was consensus that TaR, however well designed, could be derailed if persons teaching the subject exhibited bias, or sought to proselytize, or undermined the students' perception of any religion. On the other hand, the chances of success of TaR would be greater if teachers were able to demonstrate fairness, objectivity, and neutrality in their presentation of the subject; stimulate interest; and promote sound values among their students. Teacher training programmes must be designed to address these issues.

Strategy for Implementation of TaR

1. Seek consensus on a philosophy for TaR in Trinidad and Tobago through consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Such consultation might be led collaboratively by the School of Education, UWI, UTT, CXC, and the IRO of Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Implement a public education programme on TaR to address misconceptions
3. Establish a Unit of Religious Education in the School of Education, UWI
4. Award Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other scholarships to do the B.Ed. or the postgraduate Diploma in Education with TaR as the main focus
5. Ensure careful selection and screening of teachers for the subject as well as the establishment of proper systems and structures for supervision and evaluation of teachers and of student performance
6. Develop and test a teacher training curriculum for the subject to include exposure to basic content of religions, as well as philosophy and social and cultural anthropology
7. Ensure mentoring of teachers by experts in the field and by officials of the different religious orientations
8. Set up a national body to sensitize all stakeholders and for a clear understanding of one another's concerns

9. Establish a broad-based working committee for curriculum development for TaR, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, and to include participants in the Comparative Religion project of the National Commission for UNESCO and other relevant stakeholders. Ensure thorough preparation and consultation preceding the change and involvement especially of curriculum staff, both to secure buy-in and for proper implementation.
10. Establish a sub-committee of the committee for curriculum development to develop and source high-quality and age-appropriate teaching materials and textbooks
11. Formulate curriculum goals reflective of the goals for TaR, which should articulate with CXC RE goals but be age appropriate
12. Develop and implement a pilot project for teacher training and for the primary and secondary schools
13. Make religious education examinable so that it would serve a purpose academically, ensuring adequate time for teaching the subject
14. Implement proper monitoring and establish feedback mechanisms such as a hotline to facilitate complaints of indoctrination by teachers

Conclusion

As Trinidad and Tobago moves beyond its 50th year of independence, a deeper understanding and more positive manifestation of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious identity is a sine qua non for our maturation as a truly integrated national community.

Like the late Lloyd Best, who adopted a counter strategy by locating himself in the landscape to play for (effect) change, the authors of this paper are playing for change by presenting TaR as a counter strategy to prejudice, intolerance, and disharmony, with the aim of fostering true and lasting harmony in diversity in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Appendix

A Partial List of Articles on Teaching Comparative Religion in Schools Appearing in the Daily Press in Trinidad and Tobago April 2011

Title of Article	Author	Newspaper	Date	Page #
The teaching of religions Part 1	Prof. Emeritus John Spence	Daily Express	April 07, 2011	13
The teaching of religions Part 2	Prof. Emeritus John Spence			
All schools will teach about all religions		Express	April 04, 2011	
Leave religion out	R. Singh	Newsday	April, 2011	
Need for teacher training: Plan to teach comparative religion at nation's school	Camille Bethel	Express	April 24, 2011	
Teach the gospel of perfection	Dr Roopnarine Singh			
Is religion education good?	Kevin Baldeosingh	Sunday Express	April 17, 2011	
How to value religion	Kevin Baldeosingh	Express	April 08, 2011	
Religious education by choice	Junior Alleyne			

Title of Article	Author	Newspaper	Date	Page #
Religious education to be mandatory		Newsday	April, 2011	
Educators on religion in schools: More explanation needed by Ministry	Janelle De Souza and Darcel Choy			
Religion in school can work	David Mohammed	Guardian	April 21, 2011	
Keep religion out of schools Part 1	Rajiv Gopie	Express	April 15, 2011	13
Keep religion out of schools Part 2	Rajiv Gopie	Express	April 22 2011	13
Religious Studies – not Religious Education	Rt Rev Elvis Elahie	Guardian	April 12, 2011	A29
Teach ethics		Newsday	April 06, 2011	10
Another look at curriculum	Newsday Staff	Newsday	April 06, 2011	8

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CAN THE "GOWN" ACT AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE "TOWN" AND THE SCHOOL? An Analysis of the Operations of the PEEPS Project in Trinidad

June George, Phaedra Pierre, Juliana Alexander,
and *Maureen Taylor-Ryan*

This paper critically assesses the pilot phase of a project mounted at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad campus, (the "gown"), which was designed to enhance the ability of urban parents of primary school children (the "town") to be involved in their children's education. Using three theoretical lenses—ecological systems theory, social capital, and "knotworking," the paper identifies challenges faced, gains accrued, and lessons learnt in the conduct of workshop sessions with parents/guardians of Standard 3 children (aged 9-10 years) at an urban primary school. While highlighting the potential of the strategy for enhancing the development of urban students, the paper suggests that future work should explore the use of community spaces for such workshop sessions, in the quest for fuller use of parents' social capital.

Introduction

The educational landscape throughout the Caribbean is in a state of flux. The usefulness of old paradigms is being questioned, and the relentless search for different ways of doing things in the attempt to make schooling more attractive for students continues. This is a complex situation and no one course of action is likely to provide all the answers to the challenges at hand.

Parental involvement in schooling is one course of action that has been pursued in some settings in the quest to enhance student interest and performance in school. In referring to a study in the United Kingdom that dealt specifically with reading attainment, Scott et al. (2012) contend that there are conditions necessary for the strategy of parental involvement to work. They state that:

> whilst the longitudinal studies confirm a strong association between parental involvement and child reading attainment, both the general quality of the parent-child relationship (e.g. sensitive responding) *and* the specific way the parent supports intellectual development

> and literacy seem to be important in promoting reading skills, though they do not emerge as major determinants. (p. 4)

Other researchers emphasize that there exists a large body of literature which points to a significant relationship between parental involvement and students' attitudes and achievement (e.g.,6 Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Jeynes (2011, 2012) adds to these mixed findings by suggesting that the most powerful aspects of parental involvement are frequently subtle, and include dispositions such as maintaining high expectations of one's children, communicating openly with children, and having a loving but structured home environment.

Within the Caribbean context, research in this area is somewhat sparse. Munroe (2009) reports on a study in Jamaica that built on a few earlier studies, and which explored factors impacting on parents' involvement in their children's schooling. She indicates that this study was done against the backdrop of the 2004 Education Task Force Report in Jamaica, which concluded that inadequate involvement of parents in the education of their children was one of the factors that was having a negative effect on educational outcomes in the country. Munroe's study identified that:

> parents do want to be involved in the education of their children, both at school and at home; but across school levels, parental involvement varied, resulting in a moderate to low likelihood of positive involvement. This is attributed to: (a) strong parental role construction; (b) weak perceived sense of parent efficacy; and (c) moderate perception of invitation from others which is attributed to frequent general invitation from the school and infrequent specific invitation from the teacher. (Munroe, 2009, p. 12)

In Trinidad and Tobago, the likely importance of parental involvement in schooling was one of the findings of a study using data from the 2006 National Test, which was conducted by a consortium of researchers from the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago; the University of Victoria, Canada; and the Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago. In that study, strong positive relationships were identified between students' perceptions of the engagement of their parents/guardians in school-related activities, and student achievement in both Language Arts and Mathematics at the Standard 3 level (children aged 9-10 years). In addition, high levels of adult engagement with student learning were related to more positive student views about themselves (Anderson, George, & Herbert, 2009). The *Parent Empowerment to Enhance the Performance of Students*

(PEEPS) Project was designed to follow through on these findings by working with parents/guardians of students at the primary school level. This paper reports on the pilot phase of the PEEPS project in one urban primary school in Trinidad.

The PEEPS Project, based at the School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine (the "gown") worked with parents (the "town") in two primary schools in the St. George East Educational District in Trinidad. The terms *gown* and *town* are used here to simply denote obvious identifiers of two of the main groups of participants—university personnel and urban parents. The project was designed on the premise that parental involvement has the potential for impacting on students' holistic development, although the exact nature of the interaction is still not clearly understood. Consequently, the project was designed initially as a pilot project to: (i) determine the expressed needs of parents/guardians of Standard 3 children with respect to their ability to actively support the academic and other school activities of their children/charges, and (ii) mount and evaluate an exploratory research and development activity aimed at helping parents/guardians to be better equipped to participate in their children's education. This paper critically assesses the operations of the PEEPS project during this pilot phase, with particular emphasis on the nature and efficacy of the process of collaboration among the gown, school, and town and the outcomes of that process.

Parental Involvement: What Is It?

A literature search on the term "parental involvement in schools" throws up numerous articles. Typically, the term refers to the various ways in which parents are active in their children's lives, and in their school lives in particular (see, for example, Avvisati, Besbas, & Guyon, 2010; Epstein, 1997; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Spera, 2005). Epstein (2008) recommends strategies that schools can use to enhance parental involvement. She suggests that, "by selecting activities that focus on parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, schools can help all parents become involved in different ways" (p. 11). These activities for parents include developing child-rearing skills and understanding child and adolescent development; taking part in the academic life of the school (e.g., by giving talks to students); functioning as a member of school committees, and working collaboratively with other members of civil society, all in the attempt to enhance student growth and achievement.

Other classification schemes have been used for the types of parental involvement, and Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) have sought

to simplify the situation by collapsing the various classifications into two broad categories: (i) involvement based at school, that is, involvement that requires actual contact with the school, for example, Parent Teacher Association meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and so on; and (ii) involvement based at home, that is, school-related activities that occur outside of school, usually at home. The latter include activities such as supervising homework, reading with children, creating study spaces, and so on. This categorization into a binary system bears close resemblance to that proposed by Sheldon (2002).

While the term *parental involvement* has been used widely, there have been some attempts at further refinement. The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA (2007) points us to the fact that many children do not live with their parents, and that parents are therefore often not the key facilitator of a child's academic progress. This is certainly the case in the Caribbean. The Center is therefore careful to include the term *home* in its discussions and refers to *parent and home involvement*. In this paper, the term *parent* will be used to refer to both parents and guardians who are responsible for the care and upbringing of children.

Calabrese Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George (2004) take the process of refinement even further. They distinguish between *parental involvement* and *parental engagement*. They shun what they perceive to be a deficit model of parenting inherent in the notion of *parental involvement* existing in many studies that have a focus only on what successful parents do, and they contend that such deficit models position parents as "subjects to be manipulated or without power to position themselves in ways they see fit (i.e., here are the things that successful parents do)" (p. 4). They define the preferred term *engagement* to include "parents' orientations to the world and how those orientations frame the things they do" (p. 4). While this concern with foregrounding parental agency is desirable and laudable, we felt that the developing country context in which we work, with a colonial past and a "top down" approach in education, required that parents be called together and the issues ventilated as a first step towards finding out what help they (parents) thought they needed. We were guided by Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011), who report that "when parents from disadvantaged groups receive information and training that increase their social and intellectual capital, they can effect change in the educational system through their individual and collective actions" (p. 33). We therefore did not object to the use of the term *parental involvement*, notwithstanding the fact that our intention was to help parents to transition to the point where their voice was dominant.

Whether the term *involvement* or *engagement* is used, there is general agreement that parents do have a role to play, and the absence of such a role is regarded as a "missing link" (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011) in the education of children. It is not surprising, then, that so much effort has been exerted, and is still being exerted, in facilitating parental involvement in the schooling of children. One such successful venture is seen in the work of Sandra Dean, a Caribbean-born educator working in an inner city public school in Canada. According to Dean (2000), the community was plagued with many social problems and the school was performing at very unacceptable levels. Among the strategies Dean used to effect a turnaround were engaging community members in coaching and mentoring students, and including parents in the decision-making process at the school (two of Epstein's strategies). She also introduced a programme designed to foster respect among all participants in the school community, and the outcomes of this eventually filtered to the homes. To encourage parents to attend parents' meetings at the school, she suggested to teachers that they call the parents of each child to say something good about the child. Over time, the entire community became involved. After three years of dedicated effort, Dean reports that the school became the top school in the district.

Although parental involvement in schooling is thought to be beneficial for students, it is not always easily achieved, especially with respect to lower-income families (see, for example, Bower & Griffin, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2013). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) contend that the gap between the "rhetoric" and the "reality" of parental involvement occurs because there are factors at the level of the parent/home, child, teacher, and society that can hinder the process. In a small study on school influences on parents' role beliefs in two middle schools in the USA, Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) found that "parents' perceptions of school expectations of involvement, the school climate, and students' invitations to involvement predicted parental role beliefs about their own involvement in their students' education" (p. 90).

These insights from the literature served to alert us to some of the challenges that we were likely to face in engaging in the PEEPS project in an urban school and with many parents falling into the lower socio-economic bracket. We were aware from our work as educators in close contact with schools that some parents, particularly those who did not have the benefit of an extended education, experience some difficulty in helping their children with school work. We were also aware that, in some instances, the areas of challenge extended beyond things academic to motivational and disciplinary issues. Against this backdrop, we set out to ascertain how the parents under study were coping, what they perceived

to be their needs, what they had to offer as individuals and as a group to help meet perceived needs, and how we, the gown, could assist through the PEEPS initiative.

Theoretical Underpinnings

There are different levels at which a theoretical lens was applied in the study of parental involvement in schooling in this study. First, there is the level of the child and the issues pertaining to the child's development with respect to relationships with different layers of his/her environment. Secondly, there is the level of the parents representing the town and their interface with the gown and the school in the exploration of parental involvement. Thirdly, there is the level of the inter-organizational collaborative process between the gown and the school.

Interaction of the Child With the Environment

Ecological systems theory served as the base for situating the study with respect to the interaction of the child with the environment. According to the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1989), children are affected by everything in their environment, from as nearby as the student in the next seat to as far away as the local government and political climate of the time. These layers of seemingly "concentric circles" interact with the individual, and also interact with each other. The greatest influence comes from microsystems with which the child relates directly. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994):

> A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p. 39)

These would include the home/family, school, peer group, and church settings. The next layer of influence, the mesosystem, is based in the exchanges between these microsystems. Examples of these would be the Parent Teacher Association, which would involve the interface of the school and home microsystems, or the church youth group, which would bring together the church and peer microsystems. Outside of the mesosystems lie the exosystems with which these children and families may not usually have contact or control, but which can still exert an indirect influence:

> The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40)

For example, the level of infrastructure (like the availability of health services) in a community might support or hinder the academic performance of students from that community. The scarcity of such health services may promote higher levels of absenteeism among pupils because of illness and/or lack of medical treatment.

Like Calabrese Barton et al. (2004), Paquette and Ryan (2001) consider the question of perceived parent deficiency. But unlike Calabrese Barton et al., they seem to accept that parents' roles are sometimes deficient, and raise the question of whether school interventions can "make up" for the changing and often "deficient" roles of parents in modern society with increasing work demands. They suggest that the solution is not in the school assuming these roles, but in helping parents to find ways to maintain and boost their positive interactions with their children. The PEEPS Project is another example of an exosystem with which the students and parents of this group would not usually interact. PEEPS created an avenue of collaboration between the microsystems of the school and home, focusing on and supporting parents, in order to improve the performance of the children of the families involved.

The Town/Gown/School Interface

From very early, it was decided that attempts would be made to avoid the use of a deficit model in the PEEPS project, and to pay attention instead to what parents/guardians were bringing to the table as they participated in the programme mounted to facilitate them. As such, the notion of social capital was cast as a pillar of the study. Defining social capital and its functions presents a challenge, as there are many definitions that have been put forward in the literature. The concepts of *trust* and *networks* are key components of social capital that have been highlighted (Aldrich, 2012). Other terms that have been used in a variety of ways in relation to social capital include *network of relationships, shared understanding, knowledge and interactions,* and *creating connections* (Dasgupta & Serageldin, 1999).

Social capital plays a major role in education and parental involvement contributes to social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). In addition to family income and parental education, James Coleman (1988) suggested that social capital may have an important effect on the well-being and,

specifically, the educational achievement of a child. He defined it as a resource inherent in the relations between and among actors that facilitates the well-being and development of children. He suggested that a connectedness between a child, his/her family, friends, community, and school could translate into higher academic achievement. This connectedness, a product of social relationships and social involvement, generates social capital.

Meier (1999) has reported that researchers using Coleman's approach to social capital have advocated a variety of ways to achieve conceptual clarity while retaining several different dimensions of social capital. She cites Astone et al. (1999) who offer the following dimensions: forms of social capital (e.g., family structure); quality of social capital (e.g., degree of social involvement in relationships); and the resources available via a form of social capital (e.g., advice and information from parents or others).

All the main theorists agree that social capital is embedded in social relationships, but they differ as to their perspectives on the use of social capital. The differing foci include the function of social capital for communities (Scottish Executive, 2003, cited in Smith, 2000-2009); the use of social capital for educational purposes (Mikiewicz, 2011); and the use in business or in the search for jobs and social status (Adler & Kwon, 2002). We felt that a focus on the use of social capital for educational purposes was pertinent to this study, and we tied this to Meier's (1999) account of Astone's (1999) assertion (mentioned earlier) that one dimension of social capital is the degree of social involvement in relationships while another is the resources that it can spawn. Specifically, in the PEEPS context, we considered the social capital that the group of parents (the town) was likely to bring to the table as they functioned as participants in the collaborative effort that PEEPS was designed to be, and the social capital that could be generated from the interactions.

Inter-Organizational Collaboration

While school/university partnerships are prevalent in other parts of the world, particularly with respect to the conduct of teacher preparation programmes, they do not normally form part of the landscape of experiences in Trinidad and Tobago. The PEEPS project presented an arena for a relatively new type of collaboration that extended beyond the university and the school to include the parents as well. Fenwick (2007) opines that, with the increasing tendency of educational organizations to form collaborations, there is the need to examine such collaborations through the lens of organizational learning theory. She points to the work

of Engeström and his practice-based theory of organizational learning, known as "knotworking," as being useful in this regard.

Engeström and other researchers (see, for example, Daniels & Warmington, 2007; Engeström, 2004; Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007) have sought to take the discussion about what happens in inter-organizational collaboration to a focus on what is done and learnt together. Engeström et al. (1999, cited in Fenwick, 2007) use the term *knot* to refer to "a loose network of actors, practices and systems that does not have a center, and in which the only consistency over time is the on-going mix of interaction among contributors, discourses, tasks and tools" (p. 139). In such a context, questions of dominance and power are sidelined. After applying this concept to a case study of a collaborative venture among a Canadian university unit, a school district, and parents sitting on the executive board of a Child Learning Laboratory, Fenwick (2007) advises that:

> those who thrive in the 'knot' of collaboration learn how to be flexibly attuned to shifting elements that emerge in negotiations. Further, these actors appear to develop capacities of mapping, translating, rearticulating and spanning boundaries among the diverse positions of organisations. (p. 138)

We felt that the theory of knotworking and the concept of knots held some promise for the analysis of the interaction among the organizations involved in the PEEPS project.

Summary

The exploration of these three tranches of literature provided us with some sensitizing thoughts and helped us to shape a framework for pursuing this study. We recognized that the act of building social relationships was at the core of our plan to help parents to actively support the academic and other school activities of their children/charges, and were guided in the process by the following:

- That children are affected by everything in their environment, and particularly by interactions in microsystems that include parents/guardians and the school
- That the social capital of a group of parents/guardians, resulting from the pooled resources of the members of such a group, has the potential of facilitating the wellbeing and development of their children/charges
- That since the school and the university are organizations with their own rules, regulations, and modes of operating, inter-organizational interactions were likely to play a significant role in the planned project

Background to the Study

The PEEPS project was initiated through a pilot study involving primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The full university-based research team consisted of six members of staff of the School of Education, one UWI part-time lecturer, and the President and First Vice President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Council of Parent Teacher Associations. The team prepared for the collaborative process through regular meetings on the campus. Four members of the team agreed to work on the project at the school that is reported on in this paper, while the other members concentrated on work in another primary school.

The pilot was thought to be a necessary first step in order to gain a clear understanding of the issues that are likely to surface in the process of helping parents to be in a better position to facilitate the progress of their children at school. The sampling was basically purposive, with the intention of capturing some variation. The initial aim was to select three low-performing schools while also taking into account school size; location (urban/rural); governance structures (government/ denominational); and gender distributions (male/female/co-ed). The schools were to be located within reasonable distance from UWI. Three schools were selected but, because of difficulties experienced in setting up the project in one school, only two schools were eventually used. This paper reports on the execution of the PEEPS Project with the parents of the Standard 3 classes in the urban school chosen.

This urban school (which we shall call *Legacy*) had a population of 535 male students and 30 teachers. It is located in a setting very close to the hustle and bustle of city life. The school had been experiencing some difficult times with low performance by its students on national examinations, and had consequently been placed on "academic watch" by the Ministry of Education. The students came from varying home backgrounds, with reports from teachers that some parents worked with their children but that many parents did not seem to be able to spend quality time with their children. The male principal had been at the helm for just over a year when the project started, but he was quite keen on trying to restore the school to the prestige it had enjoyed in years past when it had produced several graduates who now occupy prominent positions in the local setting.

Procedure

General Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis

Permission for the execution of the project was sought and obtained from the Ministry of Education, the principal of the school, and the parents who turned up for the meetings. Data collection began with the very first interview held with the principal. This and other interviews and meetings were audiotaped (with permission) while some meetings with parents were also videotaped (also with permission). Field notes were also kept by team members.

All taped materials were transcribed to make the data more accessible for analysis. Transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis in the tradition of the grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The lead author initiated the coding process and the PEEPS team reviewed and finalized themes. The constant comparative technique was used to ensure that there was a good match between themes generated and the data.

Initial Phase of the Project

During the very first meeting that the research team had with the principal, he indicated his openness to new ideas as he declared, "*I am about trying everything that might work hoping that one thing will work*." He outlined that it was very difficult to get most parents to attend meetings. Similar difficulties have been reported in the literature (see, for example, Colombo, 2006; La Rocque et al., 2011). With reference to the parents, the principal declared that one had to "*sweeten them up*" to get them to collaborate. This theme of the need to entice parents to partner with the school for the benefit of their children was one that he repeated several times during the course of the study.

The research team held a meeting with the entire teaching staff of the school in January, 2011. Before the proposed project was explained to the staff, they were asked to articulate what they thought were some factors that might be affecting learning on the part of their students. Although they did not immediately mention the role played by parents, they eventually suggested that a factor that might be hindering students' learning is that modern-day parents tend to be very young and tend not to have been exposed to classes on good parenting. They felt that good parenting could lead to marked changes in students' behaviour. As one parent put it, "*So you see, you might see a change in behaviour, a change in marks, but there is a very important link between the performance of the student and the time provided by the parent*." In a follow-up meeting with Standard 3 teachers only, there continued to be a focus on the important role that

parents play, but there was also great emphasis on the skills that they thought parents were lacking.

Finally, in this initial phase of the work, members of the research team met with all Standard 3 boys, their parents, and their teachers. The meeting was organized by the principal on the request of the research team. This meeting had to be held in a nearby church building since the school does not have an appropriate space for a meeting of this capacity. Again, the project was explained and one member of the research team encouraged participants to set and pursue goals by telling her own story of working towards and achieving goals. In addition, she succeeded in getting a grandmother (who acts as a guardian) to share her story of overcoming challenging times and achieving her goals.

Having introduced the project to all significant stakeholders, listened to their initial feedback and sought their cooperation, the research team began in earnest to plan and execute workshop sessions with parents, which were designed to help them to be better prepared for involvement in their children's schooling. By this time, the students had been promoted to Standard 4, and three of the four teachers who had served in Standard 3 were maintained by the principal for the Standard 4 year.

The Collaborative Process

Laying the groundwork for collaboration between gown and school. The procedures for collaborating with the school evolved as the project progressed. The principal was the direct point of contact for the research team, and the communication proceeded through telephone contact in the main. Whenever there were difficulties in establishing telephone contact, a personal visit was made to the school by one of the team members. Soon, a protocol for operating emerged, which consisted of the following:

- The school set dates for meetings with parents on the request of and in collaboration with the team.
- The school provided physical space for meetings.
- The principal informed teachers about meetings.
- The school informed parents about meetings through a circular sent home through their child/charge.
- The team reminded parents about meetings through follow-up telephone calls.
- The team planned and managed the meetings, taking into account needs identified by parents.
- The team provided refreshments for all sessions.

Scrutiny of this protocol would reveal that the teachers were not involved in the planning or execution processes. This was not the initial intention of the research team. This loose network of actors and practices (the knot) seemed unable to accommodate teachers who had possibly never interacted at a professional level with university personnel before, except for the few on staff who had pursued degree programmes. Furthermore, the PEEPS project was operating in a context where teachers' roles were perhaps mainly defined by their duties during the school day, and after-school activity was considered something of an "extra." It should be noted, though, that the principal constantly briefed teachers about upcoming sessions with the team. It should also be noted that, sometimes, a teacher or two would attend the sessions, and there was one teacher who was also a parent who attended practically every session. The overall situation, though, was that there was little interaction between the team and the teachers once the project was in full operation, and thus the teachers did not really function as part of the knot.

On the other hand, interaction with the principal was ongoing. Given that this was an urban school which was trying to stem problems of indiscipline, and which was also trying to enhance the level of achievement of students, the principal's responsibilities were many and his attention was focused mainly in these directions. Thus the collaboration required that the team be flexible in its interactions to achieve the goal of periodic sessions with parents at the school. For example, the team took responsibility early in the game for rearranging the classroom where meetings were held to create a more informal atmosphere, telephoning parents to remind them of meetings, and providing refreshments for each meeting. On one occasion when the session with parents involved a workshop utilizing drama and requiring a fair amount of open space, the team organized to shift the session from the school (which did not have an open space such as a school hall) to a room on the university campus.

Generally, then, the knot between the principal and research team worked because of the willingness of the principal to accommodate the team and the fact that the team was "flexibly attuned to shifting elements" (Fenwick, 2007, p. 138) in the collaborative process. In spite of this, though, there were some challenges. The team experienced difficulty in conveying to the principal (and, consequently, the staff) exactly what the nature of a research and development project was. This was new territory for them and did not easily fit into their conception of what happens in schools. In fact, a few teachers commented negatively about the duration of the project as their expectation was that it would have been completed in short time. In addition, because at times there were long lapses between

sessions due to the difficulty in securing meeting dates when the school's normal calendar of events had to take precedence, a sense of discontinuity surfaced on a couple of occasions, and efforts had to be made to pull the project back on track at the ensuing session. The theory of knotworking did not fully hold, however, with respect to the center of the collaboration. The responsibility for planning the sessions always rested with the PEEPS team. But the process of making sure that the plans were taken to fruition involved collaboration, and the PEEPS team learnt how to "tie" and "untie" and "retie" the knot so that the intervention fitted into the school's calendar and was executed with the cooperation of the principal. As noted before, the teachers remained on the periphery of this process.

Laying the groundwork for collaboration between the gown and parents. Since *Legacy* is an urban school, there is no single neighbourhood community. Families of the students live in various communities throughout or near to the town. This made it difficult for the team to meet with parents outside of the scheduled meetings that were organized by the school. The team made telephone contact with parents to remind them about meetings and these short conversations helped in establishing rapport. These telephone calls also allowed opportunities for developing relationships and the formation of a "functioning community," thereby forging tighter links and helping in the development of trust. These informal conversations also helped to provide information about what parents had to offer and what were some of their needs. Later in the project, some team members organized to meet and chat with a few parents outside of the school setting in order to deepen the levels of communication. It should be noted that most parents (mainly female) worked outside of the home, and the difficulties involved in caring for children, taking public transportation to and from work, and having a regular job were many. It is to their credit that some of them made the extra effort to attend meetings and to be integrally involved in the collaboration among town, gown, and school.

In the first session with parents, the team sought to establish that it was to be a collaborative effort and that the pooling of resources was what was intended:

> *Our big aim is to work with you so that we can work with your children and get them to do better. Some of them might be doing fairly well now. If they're doing well… to get them to do even better. Some might not be doing so well so we want to raise them up. The aim is to work with you to get your children, your boys, to do better. So that is our purpose here. How are we going to do it? All of us*

> *are going to be involved, every one of us is going to be involved*. (PEEPS team member, October 18, 2011)

Time was also spent trying to find out from parents what they thought they needed in order to help their children do better. Some parents found it difficult to articulate their needs, but those needs enunciated included developing skills so as to be able to help with reading, creative writing, and mathematical operations; learning how to make homework time more productive; and general support in the process of parenting. In addition, parents were asked to indicate what they were bringing to the table that could assist in empowering all parents to enhance the performance of their children. This information was elicited as part of a session designed around a poem: "Unwrapping the gift" (Jean-Baptiste-Samuel, 2002). Many of the parents present at the session were women who either worked in lower-income jobs or were homemakers. As one female parent put it: "*All my talent is at home*." The talents they reported included domestic skills such as cooking, sewing, and decorating; artistic skills such as drama, singing, song writing, and art and craft; and athletic skills such as running, swimming, and hiking. Although some parents initially found it difficult to identify a talent, most were eventually able to do so. They seemed to embrace the idea of the PEEPS team that we could work together, utilizing talent in the group, for the betterment of the children, for example:

> *I believe by pooling the type of resources we have in this room right here…. In terms of this school, we have a lot of resources. So what we have to do is pool the ideas and see how best it will work for every individual child and see how best we could help them.* (Male parent, October 18, 2011)

Designing and executing sessions with parents. The needs identified by parents in the early stage of the project (as outlined earlier) provided the team with a starting point. However, as the project progressed, parents identified additional needs, and the PEEPS team had the task of sorting through these needs and planning workshop sessions to address them. It was in the attempt to plan workshop sessions that addressed expressed needs, while drawing on the social capital in the group, that some difficulty surfaced in that there wasn't always a clear match between the domestic, artistic, and athletic skills of parents and the needs that they identified. This was further exacerbated by the fact that parents did not live in one physical community, and meetings between parents and the PEEPS team took place mainly when the school could make the arrangements for same.

One parent described the isolation by saying, "*I never interact with a parent. Like after the meeting, everybody gone …*"

A further intervening factor was the degree of match between the skills of the PEEPS members and the needs identified by parents. The PEEPS team was formed, not on the basis of the expertise of its members, but on the basis of the interest that members had in helping parents to become better facilitators of their children's development. Eventually, some sessions were facilitated completely by PEEPS members, but the team sought the assistance of external facilitators for other sessions. After about four sessions, the PEEPS team suggested to parents that they could take full responsibility for the following session. They readily accepted the suggestion and created a small working team amongst themselves to pursue this aim. Unfortunately, the action was never brought to fruition as they experienced logistical problems. This highlighted the peculiar nature of the town setting, with parents not belonging to a single community (as exists in rural settings) and not normally being in contact with each other on a daily basis. Table 1 shows the sessions that were carried out with parents and the facilitators involved. Most sessions were based on a discussion and workshop format, and participation levels were high throughout.

In addition, at the request of the parents, a session was held with the boys only. Parents felt that the boys were more likely to be open about their feelings and concerns with the team than they were with them. Accordingly, we organized a session that consisted of two parts: (i) focus groups with 8-10 boys in each and in which the boys could express themselves freely, and (ii) a motivational talk on setting goals and believing in oneself. Since all the members of the PEEPS team are females, we organized for male facilitators to lead the focus group discussions and also for a male motivational speaker. The session with the boys was a very lively one. Boys expressed their concerns about their ability to handle certain school subjects. One prominent concern was the issue of bullying. It was striking that many boys reported that they confided, not in their parents, but in a good friend or a grandparent or an older sibling.

Table 1. PEEPS Workshop Sessions

Workshop Session	Facilitator
Setting goals and sticking with them	PEEPS team member with assistance from a grandparent and the principal
What do you bring to the table? "Un-wrapping the gift."	PEEPS team member
Motivating your child	PEEPS team members
Maximizing the child's potential	PEEPS team member
Continuous assessment in the primary school	PEEPS team member with dramatic contribution from a parent
Creative writing	Invited dramatic orator and UWI language arts specialist
"Releasing the pressure" – Coping with peer-pressure and other fears and anxieties	UWI dramatic group using participatory techniques
Relaxation techniques	Invited educational psychologist
Self-efficacy	Invited educational psychologist and PEEPS team member
Transitioning from primary to secondary school	Invited clinical psychologist

Parents' and Principal's Reactions to the Workshop Sessions

The first session with parents (and teachers and students) was timetabled by the principal within normal school hours. This was the only session at which there was full attendance. This was likely due to the fact that this was an official "school" meeting. Thereafter, meetings were scheduled after school hours as the fairly rigid school timetable does not easily allow for such meetings during school time. Attendance was much lower at the after-school meetings. Nonetheless, there was a core of parents who maintained interest in the programme throughout.

After the first two sessions, during which time parents were trying to understand and get used to the new experience, workshop sessions tended to be very lively with a great deal of participation from most of the parents who attended. But the sessions that captivated them most were the ones in which some form of dramatic presentation/activity was involved. In the workshop session by the UWI dramatic group using participatory techniques, the eagerness with which parents became totally involved in

sharing and enacting their experiences was particularly striking. The principal was captivated by the whole experience:

> *The session that I liked… I liked the input of the drama. I particularly liked the session with the Arts in Action, I think it was the most "free up" session. It was where I have never seen my parents so open in discussion, and so happy. That's the word I want to use. They were in an environment where they were free to the point that they were able to express (themselves), they were creative in terms of how they could come up with different skills to deal with parents (portrayed) in a whole dramatic presentation. That to me was significant …I enjoyed that session. I, myself came out of that session gleaming* [sic] *a lot. Then I said to myself, it offers me a suggestion to use in my staff. I think I might get more out of them that way. I particularly liked that session and I wish there were more parents involved.* (Principal, February 14, 2013)

The principal expressed disappointment that the PEEPS team had not been able to draw out parents who would not normally come to school functions. He reiterated that some parents needed to be enticed to attend:

> *I wonder if they really understood what is there to be gained from this exercise. Now, I knew some of them articulated that they wanted to know how to deal with their boys but whenever that came up it was always the parents who are always involved in any case. They have a natural inclination to learn or want to better themselves in terms of parenting. But the parents who as a principal I would have liked to see directly involved in the exercise, those parents do not have a priority on issues like these and I feel there needed to be a more creative way to get (them) involved.* (Principal, February, 2013)

It was clear that the principal (and perhaps some parents) did not buy into the notion that parents themselves possessed social capital which could be shared in an environment that would also facilitate the enhancement of social capital.

The perceptions of parents who attended the programme were elicited through one-on-one interviews in some instances, and then in a large-group interview in the final workshop session for the 2012-2013 academic year. Parents indicated that some of the ideas presented in the workshop sessions were new to them, but that they had been embracing others in the parenting act without even realizing that their actions conformed to some official principle or theory. Some themes were discerned in the parents' discourse, as described below.

Recognizing and developing social capital

As mentioned earlier, many of the parents come from the low-income bracket, with an educational background that is not very extensive. The sessions seemed to help parents to realize that, in spite of gaps in their educational background, they had the ability to help their children in some way:

> *I have no secondary education so I never used to feel comfortable working with my son. His father does his homework with him because he went to St. B's. I go to the meetings….. Since attending the meetings I realize that there is a lot I could do for my son……continue doing what all yuh doing.* (Female parent, March 23, 2013)

Parents were particularly encouraged by the guidelines provided for helping their children with creative writing, for example:

> *There was one person, she was fantastic. She was a lawyer I think from San Fernando. What these sessions have taught me is that everyone is different. You're starting from here and coming down …By the time that lawyer lady finish, listen to me Dr. I wanted to go home and write a poem! –The impact! … I said (to my son): 'Remember the sessions Mummy went to? Write a story for Mummy… Do something better for Mummy. They spoke about describing things – all that I want you to put in your essay.' He wrote a story – two to three pages. 'Home Alone' was the title ... If you hear how he described – oogoooood! That's what I want!* (Female parent, April 10, 2013)

Taking corrective action

When some parents learnt of new ways of interacting with their child, they reported that they attempted to take corrective action:

> *After those meetings, I learnt not to compare my son with anyone else.* (Female parent, March 23, 2013)

> *I am involved in everything with my son, from beginning to end, up to eleven o'clock at night. My son gives up easily, he doesn't have patience and that gets me so frustrated and I want to give up. But after that session on relaxation, I know how to deal with that. I will take a break, do the thing, and tackle him another time…It has helped me with communicating with my son.* (Female parent, April 10, 2013)

Continuing feeling of inadequacy

Some parents reported that they continued to feel inadequate when trying to help their sons with homework, particularly in the area of mathematics, for example:

> Researcher: *You mentioned earlier that you don't feel comfortable because you haven't had a good education.*
>
> Parent: *(There are) challenges trying to help him, that's just it. The fact that sometimes he will come with the Math and I have to tell him, 'Boy, if your father's not home, you have to wait till your father gets here because I really don't understand that*.' (Female parent, March 25, 2013)

Spreading it around

Overall, the parents and two of the teachers who participated were unanimously of the view that the PEEPS Project had been beneficial to them. Indeed, they were so grateful for the insights and skills gained that they clamoured for a wider sphere of influence for the project, for example:

> *I'm tired as hell but we are here and we listen to each other and what these sessions have taught me… I learned to appreciate the mothers that my son has spent time with for the years he has attended the school. The mothers, we see each other and we say, 'Hi, how you going?' And to me, that is special. It is special for you all to come here and teach us things and the session we had in UWI, the arts thing, which was fantastic. I really, really enjoyed the sessions. I will miss it. I wish that you'll continue with other schools; will branch out to other schools because I think parents need you, need this type of teaching this type of help.* (Female parent, June 5, 2013)
>
> *As a teacher in school I thought this was really good because it provided a forum for parents to come together and realise that it's not me, all of us share the same problems. Although we try to give advice sometimes we don't have the time to give it as detailed as we want. You all were there to give them an ear and the feedback that you gave and the information that you gave really supported some of the parents. In the end we saw the results in some of the children and it built a better relationship with us. A lot of the parents here are willing to help their children but they are looking for ways how to and you provided that. I wish that somehow the other Standards*

> *(classes) could also benefit from this, even if it's one lecture…*
> (Female teacher, June 5, 2013)

Summary and Discussion

By all accounts, this venture bore some benefits for those involved, but there were challenges that were faced. One big challenge was that of involving the teachers in a meaningful way. The gown was not successful in meeting this challenge. The project was executed in a context where teachers felt that students' non-performance was attributable, in part, to parental lack of knowledge and interest. The PEEPS project failed to explore these perceptions with teachers, mainly because of time constraints. Consequently, the teachers mostly functioned at the periphery and were never to be found at the centre of the activity.

The principal was of the view that some parents needed to be assured of tangible results in order for them to agree to participate in the schooling of their children. It was also clear that the principal thought that many parents are not intrinsically motivated to see about their children's interests. These challenges persisted throughout the programme and remained largely unresolved at the end of the two-year run. Alongside this, the lack of mechanisms by the research team for wider parent participation persisted. The low level of parental involvement in schools is not unique to this Caribbean context, and mention was made earlier of some of the barriers that researchers in other contexts have found to contribute to this state of affairs. This is an issue that needs to be explored in future studies.

Communicating with the principal was at times challenging, but the team circumvented these challenges when they arose. Throughout, the team exhibited the ability to mobilize at short notice when the principal indicated a possible meeting date for workshops with parents, and team members demonstrated a willingness to work with whatever physical resources were provided by the school, and they attempted to use these resources to create reasonable working spaces for collaborating with parents.

In spite of the challenges, though, there were some successes. The parents who attended were generally very enthusiastic about the project. They embraced the guiding principle that children are affected by their interactions in the microsystems of the home and the school, and were eager to find out how they could make those interactions count for good. At the end of the pilot, they expressed the view that they had benefitted tremendously from all the sessions and wished that the project would continue. Parents became quite animated during the interviews that were conducted to seek their views on the programme, and expressed their deep

appreciation for the effort by the team. In several instances, they indicated that they had been practising some of what they had learnt. Although the PEEPS team did not find it easy to use the social capital of parents in a direct way, there was evidence that many of the parents were empowered in discovering that they had talents to guide and encourage their sons, and that they had learnt new skills to add to their parenting repertoire. By the end of the pilot, one could detect that levels of trust had been enhanced and that networks were being formed. In other words, this link among the gown, the school, and the town, created through the PEEPS project, produced relationships that generated a resource (fledgling though it was) which helped parents in seeing about the well-being of children, that is, social capital was generated (Coleman, 1988). We are mindful, though, of the assertion by Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) that parents in low-income urban settings can "activate *non-traditional resources* [emphasis added] and leverage relationships…in order to author a place of their own in schools" (p. 11). The PEEPS project did not achieve this level of empowerment. We return to this point later in the paper.

The principal also benefitted from the experience. Although this type of "evolving" project was not what he was used to as an administrator, he continued to give his support by putting PEEPS meetings on the school calendar when asked, and by attending and participating in most of the meetings. Further, through PEEPS and the PEEPS network, he was able to expand his own network of professionals who could assist and support the work of the school.

This pilot project was not designed to measure quantitative gains in students' achievement levels or general well-being. It is however reasonable to suggest that students stood to gain from the enhanced interest and attention of several adults in their immediate and distant environments. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from two teachers and also from the parents attending the workshops would suggest that this was the case.

This was, indeed, "a loose network of actors, practices and systems…" but, somewhat unlike the definition of a "knot" cited earlier (Engeström et al., 1999, cited in Fenwick, 2007, p. 139), it **did** seem to have a centre, shifting though it was. Sometimes, the PEEPS team was the centre as all planning for workshops was done by the team. At other times, the principal seemed to be the centre as nothing could happen until he created a space for a meeting in the school's calendar and sent out the notice to parents. It should be noted again that the teachers were never the centre as their involvement was minimal. But it is safe to say that all activity was focused on empowering parents to enhance the performance of their children.

This pilot project may be described as a work in progress and a learning process. There are not yet any set rules or policies that could be enunciated

for interactions at the level of the mesosystem (town and school) or their respective interactions with the gown, which would be guarantees of success in other situations. There were no prototypes generated that could be applied in any context. But there are some lessons that have been learnt. One key to the viability of such a project is the participants' openness to innovation and their willingness to be flexible in practice. For the PEEPS project, this demonstrated itself in the rescheduling of sessions because of other school business, the outreach to other professionals when the team did not have the expertise, and the moving of sessions to places that could accommodate the activities planned. Most of the time, although the changes were not expected, planned, or invited, sessions were successful for those who participated.

A related lesson learnt was that this urban school setting was not a natural research site. Schools have their own culture and their own momentum, and in an urban Caribbean setting such as this, they do not readily accommodate collaboration with outside personnel for a prolonged period. It is to the credit of the principal that this barrier was overcome, albeit with some effort. But issues of power were always there under the surface. In the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, the principal wields a fair amount of power and a lot of decision making is executed by him/her. Perhaps because of this, parents initially had some difficulty understanding a project being mounted through the school where **they** were being invited to help to set the agenda. Further, the gown found itself in a position of having to be careful of not projecting in any way the societal image of the "bright" people from the university, and trying instead to project its deep desire to be a part of a collaboration. The PEEPS team can take some credit for being sensitive to the local constraints and for "tying," "untying," and "retying" as the need arose.

Parents related best in workshop sessions that incorporated drama in some form. The intensity of their reaction was an eye-opener for both the principal and the PEEPS team. In hindsight, this should not have been, as Caribbean people are noted for their love of the art forms, particularly indigenous ones. Indeed, some of the parents had indicated that they possess some artistic skills.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learnt was that, contrary to the opinion of some teachers, some of these mainly low-income parents had great aspirations for their children and were eager to make sacrifices in order to make full use of what the gown had to offer in helping them to help their children. Particularly in this regard, the gown served as a bridge between the town and the school, as some of the parents felt comfortable working with the gown to enhance their children's school experience and outcomes.

Given the dynamism of 21st century living, traditional models and methods for the education of our children are no longer yielding the kind of positive results needed and, yet, the idea of the gown creating a bridge between the school and the town is not entirely new. The sayings that "it takes a village to raise a child" (Yoruba and Igbo proverb); and "a single hand cannot bring up a child" (Swahili proverb) are among the many mores that promote collective efforts in child rearing. The PEEPS project may be thought of as a revival of these mores, reincarnated to address the contemporary and local context of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is little in the literature that mirrors the type of collaboration outlined in this paper among gown, town, and school. The findings of this pilot project therefore hold some significance for the local setting and possibly for settings with similar characteristics. There still remains the challenge of formulating avenues for interaction among town, gown, and school that would result in maximum use of parents' social capital. Whereas the use of existing structures of a principal, staff, and school building facilitated easy access to parents by the PEEPS team, the downside may have been that such a structure reinforced existing power relationships, with the parents at the bottom of the totem pole. The use of such "school-authored spaces" (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) may have stymied parents' use of non-traditional resources in the process.

For future work, this issue of space for the collaboration is one that might be focused on. Alongside this, greater use can be made of drama. A shift to a community-based setting for meetings is one possibility for dealing with these issues, even though more than one community setting might be needed for a given urban school. Drawing on extant literature, Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012) highlight that low-income parents may be more easily drawn into community-based organizations and may experience social capital development in that space. Also, the very favourable impact of the UWI dramatic group that used participatory techniques suggests that this form of interaction might be exploited further, along with parents' own community-based cultural groups. This pilot project made some small but meaningful steps in bridging the gap between the town and the school. The area is ripe for further investigation in the attempt to facilitate parents' participation in the development of their children.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Juliana Alexander is a science educator whose teaching career spanned four decades, both locally and regionally, at the secondary and tertiary levels. After earning a BSc. (Special Botany) at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, she attained a DipEd, an MEd, and an Executive Diploma in Leadership and Management (Arthur Lok Jack Institute of Business), all at UWI, St. Augustine, where she subsequently served as a lecturer in Science Education. She has also been Head of Science and School Administrator for a combined period of 25 years, in addition to serving for over two decades in curriculum development and assessment at the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). Ms. Alexander has not only inspired many young people, especially girls, to pursue careers in science, but ensured that teachers under her purview emulated her practice.

Deborah Conrad is an Associate Professor and Co-Chair in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the State University of New York at Potsdam. She currently teaches literacy methods, literacy intervention strategies, and literacy assessment courses. Her research interests include teacher education (Pre-K -6), and literacy instruction at the elementary and middle grades. Deborah is a former elementary and special education teacher.

Dennis A. Conrad is Professor and Chair of the Department of Inclusive and Special Education at the State University of New York at Potsdam. His research interests include the intersections of educational leadership, learning differences and learner diversity, and inclusive education practices. He has served as an elementary and special education teacher; and also school principal.

Loraine D. Cook teaches Research Methods and Educational Psychology at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica. Dr. Cook received a PhD in Educational Psychology from UWI in 2007. Her research interests include evaluating online education in higher education, and helping teachers to improve their teaching. She has authored and co-authored 13 peer-reviewed book chapters and journal articles. Dr. Cook is the recipient of the Dean's Award for Excellence (2007); the Most Outstanding PhD thesis award for the 2006/2007 academic year; part of a team that received the Principal's Research Award for The Research Project Attracting the Most Research Funds (Faculty of Humanities and Education; January 2009); the recipient of the Fulbright Visiting Researcher Award (2011); and, recently, recipient of the Principal's Award for Best Research Publication (article). Dr. Cook has been a visiting scholar in Applied Psychology at New York University (NYU), and has conducted several workshops in Mixed Methods and Data Analysis.

Raymond A. Dixon is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education, University of Idaho. He worked formerly as the Deputy Manager of the National Tool and Engineering Institute (NTEI) Heart/Trust NTA in Jamaica and as a Lecturer in the School of Technical

and Vocational Education, University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. One aspect of his research focuses on using verbal protocol analysis and conversation analysis to examine problem solving, particularly in STEM disciplines. He is a former Fellow of the National Center for Engineering and Technology Education (NCETE), and the Council on Technology & Engineering Teacher Education (CTETE) Leadership Institute, an affiliate of the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA). In 2015 Dr. Dixon was recognized by the Clearwater Economic Development Association (CEDA) for his leadership in improving North Central Idaho's understanding of manufacturing skills needed for future economic growth.

Hart Edwards retired as a Permanent Secretary in 2002 after 15 years in a succession of positions in that rank. Previous to that he had been a Ministerial Adviser and before that an executive at the Trinidad & Tobago Industrial Development Corporation, where he acted as General Manager. Since retirement he has been Adviser to the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (to 2006), and for four years to 2011, Chairman of the Trinidad & Tobago National Commission for UNESCO. Mr. Edwards has been Chair of the Working Group for InterReligious Studies (WGIS) since its inception, and is founder/director of the Foundation for Interreligious Studies of Trinidad & Tobago (FIRSTT). His interests include education, public affairs, international relations, technology, and innovation.

Sandra Figaro-Henry is an Educational Technologist at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. Her responsibilities include developing and conducting professional development workshops for staff at the School and teaching educational technology courses. With extensive interest and experience in blended and eLearning, ubiquitous and mobile learning, she continues to explore, present, and publish on technology integration issues in higher education. Mrs. Figaro-Henry holds an MSc. in Educational Technology from New York Institute of Technology. With over 30 years' combined experience in education and teacher education, she is committed to preparing educators for teaching with technology in the 21st century.

June George is a retired Professor of Science Education. She served for 30 years at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus in various capacities – lecturer, research fellow, senior research fellow, and professor. Over the years, her research work has been located largely in the areas of the intersection of science education and culture, teacher education, and assessment of student performance. Prof. George's research and development work with parents emerged as a result of the findings from the assessment of student performance research.

Sandra Gift has over 30 years' experience in the field of education. Her career spans the public service of Trinidad and Tobago; the international civil service (UNESCO); and higher education. For the past 13 years she has been Senior

Programme Officer, Quality Assurance Unit, St. Augustine Campus, The Vice Chancellery, The University of the West Indies (UWI), where she manages the system of academic programme quality assurance reviews and evaluations. She is author of several published journal articles and book chapters on quality in higher education and on the intersection between education and the history of the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans. Dr Gift has received awards for most outstanding coordination, in the Caribbean, as National Coordinator for the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) (from UNESCO); for excellence in quality assurance in higher education from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago; and for employee excellence and administrative leadership in her current portfolio at UWI. She is a member of regional and international higher education quality assurance professional networks; Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO; Working Group on InterReligious Studies (WGIS); and Director of the Foundation for Interreligious Studies of Trinidad and Tobago (FIRSTT).

Merle Hodge is a retired Senior Lecturer of The University of the West Indies, where she taught academic writing, creative writing, and courses in West Indian and African-American literature. She is a cultural and social activist, co-founder of Women Working for Social Progress (Workingwomen), and a writer. She has published two novels: *Crick Crack, Monkey* and *For the Life of Laetitia*; short stories; academic papers; articles in Caribbean and international journals; and a textbook, *The Knots in English: A Manual for Caribbean Users*. She is a member of the Working Group for InterReligious Studies (WGIS) core committee.

Sharon Jacqueline Jaggernauth is a holder of honours degrees from The University of the West Indies (UWI) at the levels of BA (Mathematics); Postgraduate DipEd (Mathematics); and MEd (Curriculum). She is currently a PhD candidate (Education) at The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. Prior to joining the faculty as an Assistant Lecturer at the School of Education, she was a secondary school mathematics teacher for 14 years. She currently lectures in Mathematics pedagogy and content, and Research Methods in the BEd, the Postgraduate DipEd, and MEd programmes, using both face-to-face and online modes of delivery.

Freddy James is a lecturer in Educational Leadership and Administration at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. James is a University of Warwick Postgraduate Research Fellowship Scholar, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society (TELMAS), and board member of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management. Her research on educational leadership, school improvement and policy has been published internationally and locally. Her research interests include educational leadership, policy, change and improvement, school violence, and parental involvement.

Madgerie Jameson-Charles is the holder of a BSc in Psychology (The University of the West Indies); an MEd, Education for Employment (University of Sheffield, U.K), and a PhD in Education, Learning and Instruction in Higher Education (University of Otago, New Zealand). Dr. Jameson-Charles lectures at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine in Fundamentals of Education Research, Educational Psychology, Cognition and Learning, and Health and Family Life Education. She is the Coordinator of the M.A. programme in Technical Vocational Education and Leadership, as well as an adjunct lecturer in Organisational Behaviour and Development (Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business).

Rawatee Maharaj-Sharma is a Lecturer in Science Education (Physics) at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Maharaj-Sharma coordinates the Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme. She previously lectured at York University, Canada for 5 years, in Physics and Astronomy.

Hope Mayne is the Programme Director of the Family and Consumer Studies programme at the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. She is also the Research Chair of the Caribbean Association of Home Economists (CAHE). Dr. Mayne is an advocate for the right to be educated. A classroom teacher for 9 years and a teacher educator for 14 years, education is her passion. Her research interests include teacher education, curriculum development, postcolonial agency, and urban education. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; The University of The West Indies (UWI), Mona; and the University of Technology, Jamaica. Awards include finalist for the Maria Gratton International Award (2008); William Chandler Bagley Scholarship (2010); and McKinley Health Center's Special Populations Student Concerns Committee Notable Alumni Award (2012).

Antonia Mohammed earned her BEd – Special Education from The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). Her teaching interests include folklore and the use of characters like the Midnight Robber in her culturally responsive teaching. She currently teaches at elementary school.

Lisa M. Philip is a graduate student at The University of the West Indies Open Campus. Her research interests include adult learning, students with disabilities, and culturally responsive teaching. She holds a BEd – Special Education from The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and currently teaches SEA students.

Phaedra Pierre is a lecturer in educational psychology at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. Her research interests include human development, especially adolescence and its impact on the functioning of youth in the school system; culture and education and how to

improve the teaching/learning process; and the relationship between home and school and how that influences the school performance of youth.

Dyanis Popova is a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech (US). She is completing studies in Multicultural Education and the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESOL). She has taught in middle school and higher education classrooms in the US. Her research interests include critical pedagogy, social justice research, and diversity in education.

Ms. Susan Shurland is the current Secretary General of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO. She was previously employed (1990-2005) at the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), where she worked in the areas of environmental education, project management and planning, and public relations and marketing, both in the Information Centre and in the Technical Advisory Services Department. She also worked as coordinator of the IMA's Caribbean Marine Studies journal, being guided by the late Professor Julian Kenny, who was technical editor. Ms. Shurland holds a Bachelor of Environmental Studies degree, with a focus on Environmental Education, and a master's degree in Regional Planning and Resource Development, both from the University of Waterloo, Canada. She has certificates in Public Relations from The University of the West Indies' Institute of Business; in Marketing Management from ROYTEC; and in Multilateral Diplomacy and Green Diplomacy from the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR).

Grace Sirju-Charran is a retired Senior Lecturer of The University of the West Indies (UWI). Her publication portfolio includes over 100 scientific papers, technical reports, and video presentations on Gender issues, Biotechnology, Bioethics, and Science Education. She is a member of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO; the World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology (COMEST); the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC); and the Working Group for InterReligious Studies (WGIS) core committee. Dr. Sirju-Charran has received awards for excellence in teaching, and her biography appears in Caribbean Women in Science and their Careers (NIHERST); and Women Scientists in the Americas (Inter-American National Academy of Sciences).

Maureen Taylor-Ryan is the First Vice President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Council of Parent-Teacher Associations Inc. (NPTA), which she represented with the President, Zena Ramatali, on the "PEEPS" Project. Maureen, a retiree, taught Home Economics to secondary school students and visually impaired/blind adults and students; life skills to young persons in the Multi Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST); and Physical Education to students of a junior secondary school. She facilitates "Common Sense Parenting," a programme geared to the needs of parents, and has recruited students from high-needs areas to join the NIHERST Science Club to attract them away from a life of crime to a possible Science-based career.

REVIEWERS FOR THE ISSUE

The Editorial Board of *Caribbean Curriculum* would like to extend sincere thanks to the following persons who served as reviewers for this issue. We truly appreciate their willingness to contribute to the growing corpus of quality educational literature in the Caribbean region through their thorough reviews and cogent comments, despite their heavy work schedules.

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(c) promote continuous curriculum renewal in the Caribbean region.

(3) Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced (including quotations, endnotes, and references) on standard quarto paper (8 1/2" x 11"), with ample margins. The author's name and affiliation should appear on a separate cover page, and only on this page, to ensure anonymity in the reviewing process. Include, also on separate pages, an abstract of l00-200 words, and a short biographical profile of the author (and all co-authors, if any). The APA Style Manual (6th edition) should be followed.

(4) The list of references should be arranged alphabetically by authors' last names, and placed at the end of the manuscript. Reference citations are not to be used as footnotes.

(5) Endnotes for the purpose of clarifying the text are permitted and should be denoted by superscript numbers in the text. The numbered endnotes should be typed double-spaced and placed before the list of references.

(6) Tables and figures should be numbered, captioned, and inserted at appropriate points in the text.

(7) Manuscripts should be submitted as electronic files in Microsoft Word via email, as an attachment. All manuscripts will be refereed anonymously.

(8) Manuscripts that do not conform to all the above specifications will be returned immediately to the author for conformity.

(9) Authors will receive five (5) copies of their articles without charge.